***Summary***

***of***

***Presbyterian Church (USA)***

***Social Witness Policy Statements***

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**PC(USA) SOCIAL POLICY STATEMENTS**

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice/acswp/topics/>

**THE PC(USA) AND SOCIAL WITNESS POLICY (p. 5)**

1. [Why and How the Church Makes Social Policy Witness (1993)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/2-why_and_how_the_church_makes_a_social_policy_witness_1993_and_2003_rev.pdf) p. 5
2. [Social Creed for the 21st Century: Connecting to the Creed](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/1-connectingtothecreed-2008.pdf); [(Korean) (2008)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/socialcreed-korean.pdf); [(Spanish) (2008)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/credosocial.pdf) p. 5
3. [Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy Agenda Summary (2014 to 2016)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/Advisory-Committee-on-Social-Witness-Policy-Agenda-Summary-2014-to-2016.pdf) p. 5
4. [Toward a New Social Awakening: The Role for a 21st Century “Social Creed of the Churches” (2008)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/4-towardnewsocialawakening-2008.pdf)
5. [God Alone is Lord of the Conscience (1988)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/1-god-alone-is-lord-1988.pdf) p. 5

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1. [Resolution on International Criminal Court (1999)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/5-Presbyterian_Teachings_on_the_Death_Penalty-2000.pdf) p. 6
2. [Moratorium on Capital Punishment (2000)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/6-international-criminal-courts-1999.pdf) p. 6
3. [Resolution on Restorative Justice (2002)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/4-restorative-justice-2002.pdf) p. 6
4. [Resolution Calling for the Abolition of For-Profit Private Prisons (2003)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/3-abolition-of-for-profit-prisons-2003.pdf) p. 6
5. [Resolution Against Torture: Human Rights in a Time of Terrorism (2006)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/2-resolution-against-torture-2006.pdf) p. 7
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1. [“A Letter to Presbyterians:” The PCUSA 1953 General Council Challenge to McCarthyism (1953)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/3-1953_letter_to_presbyterians-1953.pdf) p. 8
2. [Lift Every Voice: Democracy, **Voting Rights**, and Electoral Reform (2008)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/2-votingrights-2008.pdf) p. 8
3. [Election Protection and Integrity in Campaign Finance ACSWP (2016)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/Election-Protection-and-Integrity-in-Campaign-Finance-2016-ACSWP.pdf) p. 9
4. [Loving our Neighbors: Equity and Quality in **Public Education** (K-12) (2010)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/1-lovingourneighborsk-12-2010.pdf) p. 9
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2. [Restoring Creation for Ecology & Justice (1990)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/6-restoring-creation-for-ecology%26justice-1990.pdf) p. 10
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2. [Turn Mourning Into Dancing! A Policy Statement on Healing Domestic Violence and Study Guide (2001)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/5-dancing-2001.pdf) p. 18
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4. [Gambling - summary of resources (1935-1996)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/social-issues/gambling/) p. 19
5. [Drug Reforms Proposed for the PC(USA) (2018 GA](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/Drug-Reforms-proposed-for-PCUSA-2018-GA.pdf)) p. 19
6. [Sexual Violence in the U.S. Military: A Human Rights Update (2014)](https://pc-biz.org/#/search/4789) p. 19
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2. [Western Sahara: Occupied, Non-Self-Governing Territory and Test Case for International Law (2014)](https://pc-biz.org/#/search/4733) p. 25
3. **CUBA:** [New Hopes and Realities in Cuban American Relations: A ‘Neuvo Momento (2016)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/New-Hopes-and-Realities-in-Cuban-American-Relations-2016-ACSWP.pdf) p. 26
4. **MIDDLE EAST:** [Breaking Down the Walls Middle East Report & Supplement (2010 & 2012)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/4-middle-east-study-2010-2012.pdf) p. 26
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6. [For Human Rights and Civic Freedom: Movements for Democratic Change in the Arab World (2012)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/3-human_rts_civic_freedom...arab_world-2012.pdf) p. 26
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10. [Resolution on Equal Rights for All Inhabitants of Israel and Palestine, and for Conversations with Prophetic Voices (2014)](https://pc-biz.org/#/search/4793)
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3. [Resolution on Just Peacemaking and the Call for International Intervention for Humanitarian Rescue (1998)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/6_just_peacemaking-1998.pdf) p. 28
4. [Resolution on Violence, Religion, and Terrorism (2004)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/5-violence-religion-terrorism-2004.pdf) p. 29
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6. [Peace Discernment Interim Report – Encountering the Gospel of Peace Anew: An Invitation to Discernment and Witness (2012)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/3-peace-discernment-interim-report-2012.pdf) p. 29
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3. **RACE:** [Building Community Among Strangers: A Report on Racism, Social Class Divisions, Sex-based Injustices, and Religious Intolerance and Conflict (1999)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/4-building-community-among-strangers-1999.pdf) p. 30
4. [The Gospel from Detroit: Renewing the Church’s Urban Vision (2014)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/1-the_gospel_from_detroit-2014.pdf) p. 30
5. **CLASS:** [From Homelessness to Hope: Constructing Just, Sustainable Communities for All God’s People (2008)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/3-homelessness_report-2008.pdf) – p. 31
6. [City Churches: Conviction, Conversation, and Call to Action (2016)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/City-Churches-Conviction-Conversation-Call-to-Action.pdf) p. 31

**PC(USA) SOCIAL POLICY STATEMENTS**

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice/acswp/topics/>

**SOCIAL WITNESS POLICY STATEMENTS**

[**WHY AND HOW THE CHURCH MAKES SOCIAL POLICY WITNESS (1993)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/2-why_and_how_the_church_makes_a_social_policy_witness_1993_and_2003_rev.pdf)

*“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”* Romans 12:2

“The report on "Why and How the Church Makes a Social Policy Witness" explores and responds to the discomfort experienced by some members and congregations with the social witness policies and programs of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The task force was appointed in 1988 by the Committee on Social Witness Policy (CSWP). The CSWP sent this report to the 204th General Assembly (1992) for purposes of study. A consultation between the General Assembly Council and the sixteen synods was held November 6-8, 1992, and the text was amended based on its results. The CSWP now submits the report and invites the 205th General Assembly (1993) to adopt its recommendations and approve its back- ground paper… Reformed teaching sustains a witness and guides the process used to develop its policy. It is constantly being renewed and reformed by the Spirit. Certain explicit affirmations are employed as the church makes a social witness and develops policy for such witness…”

[**SOCIAL CREED FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: CONNECTING TO THE CREED (2008)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/1-connectingtothecreed-2008.pdf)

[Social Creed for the 21st Century (Korean) (2008)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/socialcreed-korean.pdf); [Social Creed for the 21st Century (Spanish) (2008)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/credosocial.pdf)

 (Led by PC(USA); consensus statement by National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.)

 *“Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh*.” Ezekiel 11:19

 *“****15****You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor.****16****You shall not go around as a slandereramong your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbor: I am the Lord.”* Leviticus 19:15-16

“In our time of economic crisis, the churches have an answer*, a constructive vision of the directions needed for a fairer society and a healthier world*. This non-doctrinal Social Creed is a positive framework for needed new thinking and action by individuals, institutions and government itself, all of which are called to serve the common good*. It embodies the prophetic heart for justice, which insists that all persons must be treated equally and that societies are judged by how they treat their weakest members*.” (p. 6)

[**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL WITNESS POLICY AGENDA SUMMARY (2014 TO 2016)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/Advisory-Committee-on-Social-Witness-Policy-Agenda-Summary-2014-to-2016.pdf)

*“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”* Matthew 6:13-16

“Social witness is part of what it means for the church to be “salt” and “light” in the world today. Coming from Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:13–14, the images of Salt & Light also give name to the ACSWP on-line newsletter. They undergird the committee’s faithfulness to its mission statement: *The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) serves the prophetic calling of the whole Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) by providing the General Assembly with careful studies of pressing moral challenges, media for discussion and discernment of Christian responsibilities, and policy recommendations for faithful action…* The term, social witness, is a shorthand way to combine evangelism and social justice. Witness is bigger than advocacy, but it has the moral purpose of pointing to God’s intention for some part of the world, and often drawing attention to people in need or who are suffering… As expressed notably by Martin Luther King Jr., the church is to be a “moral conscience” to the nation.” (p. 1)

[**GOD ALONE IS LORD OF THE CONSCIENCE (1988)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/1-god-alone-is-lord-1988.pdf)

*“(Jesus) said to them, ‘Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to god the things that are God’s.”* Luke 20:25

*“For two hundred years, General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church have been concerned with religious liberty and the relationship of church and state.* The first General Assembly might well have heard the echo of Hanover Presbytery’s mighty Memorial to the Virginia legislature: “We ask no ecclesiastical establishments for ourselves; neither can we approve of them when granted to others.” Since 1788, our basic Principles of Church Order have placed in the first position the powerful commitment of our Reformed faith to religious liberty: “God alone is Lord of the conscience.... *We do not even wish to see any religious constitution aided by the civil power, further than may be necessary for protection and security, and at the same time be equal and common to all others*.” (p. 7)

**CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

[**RESOLUTION ON INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT – ICC (1999)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/5-Presbyterian_Teachings_on_the_Death_Penalty-2000.pdf)

*“Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless.”* Isiah 10:1-2

Resolution on the International Criminal Court\* I. Policy Recommendations:

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) recommends that the 211th General Assembly (1999) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) do the following:

1. *Commend* the United Nations and the International Conference in Rome for the drafting and adoption of the *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court* (ICC).
2. *Affirm* the need for international judicial mechanisms for the administration of justice capable of addressing major categories of crime with consistent application for all countries.
3. *Call upon all governments* to be diligent in the conduct of affairs, preventing those acts that might constitute offenses of international character as defined by law, holding their own citizens accountable.
4. *Call upon the United States administration* to provide international leadership by signing the treaty, submitting it to the Senate for ratification, and supporting the creation of the International Criminal Court.
5. *Call upon the United States Senate* for prompt consideration and ratification of the treaty.
6. *Encourage Presbyterians* to learn about the International Criminal Court and the necessity for  its creation, and to support the participation of the United States in the International Criminal Court.
7. Request that the appropriate offices of the *General Assembly* make available information for study.
8. *Direct the Stated Clerk to communicate this resolution* and its background information to the secretary general of the United Nations, the president of the United States, the secretary of state, the secretary of defense, and every member of the United States Senate.

 [**MORATORIUM ON CAPITAL PUNISHMENT (2000)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/6-international-criminal-courts-1999.pdf)

*“While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him… But the Lord said to him, ‘Not so, anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.’ Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him.”* Genesis 4:8; 15

The 212th General Assembly (2000) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

1. *Reaffirms the positions* of the 171st (1959), 177th (1965), and 189th (1977) General Assemblies of the United Presbyterian Church, the 106th General Assembly (1966) of the Presbyterian Church U.S., and the 197th General Assembly (1985) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (Minutes, 1985, Part I, p. 682) and declares its continuing opposition to capital punishment.
2. *Calls for an immediate moratorium on all executions* in all jurisdictions that impose capital punishment.
3. Directs the *Stated Clerk* of the General Assembly to *communicate the call for an immediate moratorium and our continuing opposition to capital punishment* to the President of the United States, our representatives in Congress, as well as the governors and legislators of the thirty-eight states with persons incarcerated while awaiting execution.

[**RESOLUTION ON RESTORATIVE JUSTICE (2002)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/4-restorative-justice-2002.pdf)

*“But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”* Luke 19:9-10

“In keeping with this and previous General Assembly actions, the *Criminal Justice Program of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* has become an articulate voice within a widespread movement that is best known as restorative justice. Restorative justice is sometimes called *transforming or transformative justice*, *creative justice, relational justice, reparative justice, or healing justice*. It is a fairly new term, but it is not a new idea. Christians find its roots in the *Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*. Restorative justice is a creative and constructive alternative to the widespread understanding of justice as retribution, with its emphasis on retaliation or punishment. Restorative justice is not oriented toward the imposition of penalties, or the exaction of revenge, or the infliction of pain, but toward the realization of the biblical visions of shalom and the kingdom of God. A simple definition of *restorative justice is “addressing the hurts and the needs of the victim, the offender, and the community in such a way that all—victim, offender, and community—might be healed.*”

[**RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE ABOLITION OF FOR-PROFIT PRIVATE PRISONS (2003)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/3-abolition-of-for-profit-prisons-2003.pdf)

*“The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ They replied, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ Then they spoke the world of the Lord to him and to all the others in this house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God, he and his whole household.” Acts 16:29-34*

“In agreement with the statements of the *1910 and 1915 General Assemblies*, we believe that the ultimate goal of the criminal justice system should be “restorative justice”: “addressing the hurts and the needs of the victim, the offender, and the community in such a way that all—victim, offender, and community—might be healed” (Resolution on Restorative Justice, Minutes, 2002, Part I, p. 576). We realize that, given the limits of our knowledge and understanding at this time, some may need to be incarcerated for life because they are a danger to themselves and others. But we hope that in the future, *advances in working with such prisoners through spiritual, medical, rehabilitative, psychological, and educational techniques may some day make it possible for every prisoner to be successfully rehabilitated and restored to their community and family*. We have, along with other citizens, trusted the over-sight of this responsibility to our governmental leaders. This must continue to be their responsibility; *it cannot be delegated from the public to the private sector*. However, the shortage of funds that many governments are experiencing makes them receptive to offers from the private sector to build and/or operate prisons. Since the goal of for-profit private prisons is earning a profit for their shareholders, there is a basic and fundamental conflict with the concept of rehabilitation as the ultimate goal of the prison system. *We believe that this is a glaring and significant flaw in our justice system and that for-profit private prisons should be abolished*. The question of whether human beings should be incarcerated, of how they should be treated while in prison, of when they will be released, can not be answered by whether or not these steps will create profit for a corporation. In a humane society, in a democratic society, there are some things that can never be for sale, even and especially when they involve “one of the least of these followers of mine.” *Even if for-profit private prisons could achieve significant cost savings to the tax- payer, which in fact they have not been able to do, they would still be morally unacceptable. Private prisons are not an economic but a deep religious and ethical issue, a cornerstone of our collective work to put justice back into the so-called “criminal justice system.”* The moral concern and authority of the faith community make it critical that our voices be heard and our weight be felt.”

[**RESOLUTION AGAINST TORTURE: HUMAN RIGHTS IN A TIME OF TERRORISM (2006)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/2-resolution-against-torture-2006.pdf)

*“The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him, ‘Hail, king of the Jews!’ Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. They led him out to crucify him.”* Mark 15:16-20

*“The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.”* Acts 16:22-25

“*This resolution on Human Rights focuses on the United States, as our nation has gone from being a leader in the cause of human rights to a cause for alarm among democratic nations.* None of the observations in this report are pleasant to make, nor are they meant to delineate the full scope of human rights’ concerns in the world. Ongoing, entrenched human suffering and pervasive abuse of power continue to plague the peoples of the world. This resolution follows the biblical model provided by the prophet Amos, who surveyed the countries around Judah with judgments attributed to God, before turning to Jerusalem. Amos summarizes the sins of each of the nations and warns, “... for three transgressions ... and for four, I [God] will not revoke the punishment” (Amos 2:6). He addresses his greatest grief to his own nation: “[Woe to] those who are at ease in Zion ... O you that ... bring near a reign of violence ... you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood” (Amos 6:1, 3, 12). We also feel the weight of Jesus’ words, “... first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye” (Matt. 7:5).” (p. 6)

The 217th General Assembly (2006) approved the following (Minutes, 2006, Part I, pp.50,51; 867-876).

* 1. *Approve the “Resolution* on Human Rights in a Time of Terrorism and Torture,” and direct the Stated Clerk to make the recommendations and background available on the website of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), [www.pcusa.org](http://www.pcusa.org).
	2. Affirm that the *General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) opposes the use of torture* and all forms of ‘cruel, inhuman, or degrading’ interrogation by all agencies, employees, or agents of the United States government, and all foreign governments and/or combatants;…
	3. *Endorse congressional and judicial remedies* for the use of torture and illegal detention by agencies of the U.S. government, such as the appointment of a special counsel, open hearings, appropriate investigation, and *legislation outlawing the use of “extraordinary rendition” and extraterritorial prison facilities*.
	4. Request the *Stated Clerk and the Moderator* of the 217th General Assembly (2006) to include *salient concerns* of this report in any public summary of the actions of the assembly directed to public officials, ecumenical partners, and church leaders;
	5. *Encourage members, sessions, presbyteries, and synods to pray for all victims of human rights abuse and those who persecute them*, particularly in their observances of Human Rights Day (each December 10), to seek ways to assist these victims and prevent further abuse of others;
	6. Authorize the *Office of the Stated Clerk*, as in the case of conscientious objectors, to *express support for the principled refusal on grounds of Christian conscience by Presbyterian military, intelligence, and other personnel* who are asked to participate in coercive and/or covert detention of prisoners;
	7. Authorize the *Stated Clerk*, in consultation with the Advisory Committees on Litigation and the Constitution and the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, to express support for the *protection of the right of privacy for U.S. citizens against intrusion* by government or private entities; and
	8. *Urge all Presbyterians*, while being attentive to issues of human rights related to U.S. policy and practice, to *continue to advocate for human rights* in the many places around the world where those rights are in jeopardy.

[**GUN VIOLENCE, GOSPEL VALUES: MOBILIZING IN RESPONSE TO GOD’S CALL (2010)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/1-gun-violence-policy-2010.pdf)

*“Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. With that, one of Jesus’ companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. ‘Put your sword back in its place,’ Jesus said to him, ‘for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.”* Matthew 26:50-52

Gun Violence, Gospel Values: Mobilizing in Response to God’s Call *challenges our society’s fatalism and numbness in accepting the highest gun death rates in the world, reviews previous efforts and positions of the churches, and proposes a new “spiritual awakening” approach: a church-related, community-based strategy* inspired by “Heeding God’s Call” in Philadelphia and similar groups in Richmond, Virginia and central New Jersey. The report looks at our *culture of violence-acceptance*, with its undercurrents of fear and desperation, including high rates of gun use in male suicide. In the average year over 100,000 are shot by guns. In 2006, 30,896 of those victims died. According to statistics compiled by the Brady Campaign, 16,883 of these deaths were suicides, including over 2,000 young people (ages 10-241). The report also looks at the gun violence epidemic in our inner cities, drawing on public health and community policing perspectives to focus on the spread of illegal weapons. This response to the 2008 General Assembly’s request, for a *“Reformed theology of proactive, constructive non-violence,” honors the value of human life, recognizes institutional interests and sin in the proliferation of urban and suburban violence, and encourages a renewal of social solidarity to overcome the distrust and disconnection that violence exploits.* The organizing model both *addresses gun violence concretely and rebuilds community*, giving a strong place to churches involved, and addresses why previous gun violence prevention efforts have not succeeded, despite high levels of public support for reasonable violence prevention measures.

**DEMOCRACY, EDUCATION, AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY**

*“Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerely and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”* Joshua 24:14-15

[**“A LETTER TO PRESBYTERIANS:” THE PCUSA 1953 GENERAL COUNCIL CHALLENGE TO MCCARTHYISM (1953)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/3-1953_letter_to_presbyterians-1953.pdf)

“The 165th General Assembly made the following pronouncement for the guidance of Presbyterians: *‘All human life should be lived in accordance with the principles established by God for the life of men and of nations*. This is a tenet of Biblical religion. It is also a basic emphasis in our Presbyterian heritage of faith. ‘As individuals and as a group, Christians are responsible for adjusting their thought and behavior to those everlasting principles of Scripture. It is no less their responsibility as citizens of their nation, to seek as far as their influence may extend, to bring national life and all the institutions of society into conformity with the moral government of God, and into harmony with the spirit of Jesus Christ.’ We suggest therefore, that all Presbyterians give earnest consideration to the following three basic principles and their implications for our thought and life. 1. The Christian Church has a prophetic function to fulfill in every society and in every age. 2. The majesty of truth must be preserved at all times and at all costs. 3. God’s sovereign rule is the controlling factor in history.”

[**LIFT EVERY VOICE: DEMOCRACY, VOTING RIGHTS, AND ELECTORAL REFORM (2008)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/2-votingrights-2008.pdf)

*“Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, ‘Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the think displeased Samuel when they said, ‘give us a king to judge us.’… But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, ‘No! But there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.’ And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Obey their voice and make them a king.’”* 1 Samuel 8:4-5;19-22b

“This resolution *affirms the extension of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended, and opposes all measures that would disenfranchise voters on the basis of race or other condition*. It supports the *re-enfranchisement of felons* who have paid their debt to society and *“full voting rights” for the District of Columbia*. It urges variability of voting machine totals, as well as “best practices” in the administration of elections. It opposes “caging,” “purging lists,” special ID requirements, and other arbitrary challenges and intimidation of voters. It *favors public funding and lobbying restrictions* designed to curb favoritism and conflicts of interest. Beyond improving the current system, it recommends ways to rotate primaries and deal with consequences of the Electoral College, such as a national popular vote based in an affirmative right to vote, and reforms such as “Instant Run-o Voting” and “Proportional Voting,” a voting holiday or weekend, non-partisan election commissions, universal voter registration, and more.

[**ELECTION PROTECTION AND INTEGRITY IN CAMPAIGN FINANCE ACSWP (2016)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/Election-Protection-and-Integrity-in-Campaign-Finance-2016-ACSWP.pdf)

*“Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And let them judge the people at all times...”* Exodus 18:21

*“You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous.”* Deuteronomy 16:19

“Without claiming to be a judicial body, but in accord with our understanding of the impacts of concentrated power on the common good, the General Assembly affirms the words of the Supreme Court in 1990 in Austin v. Michigan Chamber of Commerce as it spoke in favor of the government having a compelling interest in legislation to *prevent or restrain: “the corrosive and distorting effects of immense aggregations of wealth that are accumulated with the help of the corporate form and that have little or no correlation to the public’s support for the corporation’s political ideas.”* As a corollary, the assembly supports measures and judgments that distinguish clearly between technical corporate personhood and the personhood of individual citizens, and opposes laws and rulings that allow the spending or communications of corporations and other private enterprises to be considered free speech, necessary to it, or otherwise accorded the rights due human persons.” (p. 1)

[**LOVING OUR NEIGHBORS: EQUITY AND QUALITY IN PUBLIC EDUCATION (K-12) (2010)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/1-lovingourneighborsk-12-2010.pdf)

*“You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”* Deuteronomy 6:5; 11:18-20 (6:6-9)

*This study examines the multiple economic, racial and ethnic, and social disparities that weigh down our current education efforts and impede them from fulfilling this role.* The study acknowledges the *negative national consequences of an emerging dual track education system— one privileged, one not*—and *calls for reforms and reinvestment in public education (K–12) in order to offer all children similar opportunities to develop their talents to the fullest and become constructive citizens*. From the perspective of the Reformed tradition, with its longstanding commitment to expanding educational access, the study celebrates the value of sharing educational approaches while building a common democratic ethos in our society. Charter schools, for example, are a product of the frustration that people feel with the shortcomings of the current system and their desire to experiment with alternative approaches. Yet the privilege, based in economic status, to choose an educational alternative for one’s own child does not absolve anyone from the obligation to support the public schools that educate the vast majority of our nation’s children. Indeed, this report is founded on the assumption that every child has the right to equity and quality in education and that it is the responsibility of the whole church to protect and preserve this right for all children, in accordance with Jesus’ call to us to understand all in need as our neighbors, and in support of Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *Recommendations* pay attention to the basics of teacher pay, retention strategies, and ways of building community support. They affirm that *acting as neighbor means making sure that all children have access* to up-to-date textbooks and adequately equipped computer labs, to well- qualified teachers who understand them and know how to address their needs, to curricula that educate in the arts as well as the language arts, in social sciences as well as the sciences, and in health and physical education as well as academics. Acting as neighbor also means attending school board and PTA meetings, volunteering to tutor and mentor, and being informed on local and national education issues.”

[**EDUCATE A CHILD, TRANSFORM THE WORLD TOOLKIT (2015)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/1-lovingourneighborsk-12-2010.pdf)

*“You shall* Deuteronomy 6:5

“The role of public schools must be consistently maintained for the good of the whole community. Quality public education gives us the best chance to empower the most students to embrace an abundant life in community. In 1987, the reunited Presbyterian church (USA) adopted a Call to Church Involvement in the renewal of Public Education, calling Presbyterians ‘to join others in their communities – to provide schools that will secure for all children an education that develops their capacities to serve as creative and responsible persons in the common life and – to mobilize the resources available in each community – home, church, community organizations (both public and private) – that will support public schools and share in achieving the necessary education of children and youth”. (p. 2)

**ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS**

[**THE POWER TO SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER (1981)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/7-power_to_speak_truth_to_power-1981.pdf)

*“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness covered the face of the deep. And the Spirit of god was hovering over the face of the waters.”* Genesis 1:1-2

*“… you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them. You may eat from them, but you shall not cut them down. Are the trees in the field human, that they should be besieged by you? Only the trees that you know are not trees for food you may destroy and cut down,…”* Deuteronomy 20:19-20s

“A Public Policy Statement on Energy, Its Production and Use, Adopted by the 21st (1981) General Assembly, Presbyterian Church in the U.S., and by the 193rd (1981) General Assembly, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.; with a Background Analysis, by Robert L. Stivers, Commended for Study in Connection with the Public Policy Statement. As servants of the Truth, the truth we discern about present energy choices and our Americans and Presbyterians can be summarized with deceptive simplicity. *The era of cheap and abundant energy is over*. The petroleum and natural gas currently supporting industrial-technological society are being depleted rapidly and are not renewable. Present of organizing and distributing energy are lacking in justice, sustainability, and the participation of people. In the midst of this situation, God continues to call us to responsibility to the rest of creation and to the poor and helpless among us. The new era that must come offers fresh possibilities for humane communities and restored creation. The general goal of the new era is clear and affirmed. *The world must develop means of meeting its energy needs from sources that are sustainable over a long term, essentially renewable resources*. In the course of achieving that goal, provision must be made to assure an equitable distribution of sufficient. to basic human needs world-wide as an Initial and minimum objective, to alleviate human suffering and permit people and societies to receive and respond to God's love.”

[**RESTORING CREATION FOR ECOLOGY & JUSTICE (1990)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/6-restoring-creation-for-ecology%26justice-1990.pdf)

*“if you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. And the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.” Isaiah 59:9b-11*

“The 202nd General Assembly (1990) believes God calls the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to engage in the *tasks of restoring creation in the "turnaround decade" now beginning* and for as long as God continues to call people of faith to undertake these tasks.”

[**HAZARDOUS WASTE, RACE, AND THE ENVIRONMENT (1995)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/5-hazardouswasteraceandenvironment-1995.pdf)

*“Moses and Aaron did as the Lord commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and in the signt of his servants he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile turned into blood. And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.”* Exodus 7:20-21

“The conclusion that poor communities and communities of color are bearing a disproportionate burden of the nation’s hazardous waste sites is unavoidable. Typically, local residents are unaware and rarely are involved in the decision-making process of facilities siting. Besides issues of facility siting, there are also major problems in identifying environmental health hazards. Too often a heavy burden of proof is placed upon those least able to carry it instead of upon industry. Affected communities do not have easy access to technical information and the political and economic decision-making processes. Furthermore, a lack of expertise and resources prevent affected communities from utilizing current technical information that could help them identify potential environmental health hazards. Consequently, the choices available to them are narrowed. Even when hazards are identified, affected groups often do not have the financial resources or technical expertise to win against the overwhelming resources of companies or government. *The church can be instrumental in standing beside potentially affected communities by*: (1) *providing information* about resources and technical expertise, and (2) *establishing a fund* that would make it possible for economically deprived citizens who could be affected by this problem to obtain the technical assistance needed to build a credible case. There is a critical need to support the development of new participatory mechanisms and structures at the federal, state, and local levels to ensure the involvement of affected citizens in problem definition and solution. There is a special need to make sure that these *mechanisms include members of poor and racial ethnic communities that do not have a tradition of involvement in community political and economic decision making*.”

[**JUST EATING? PRACTING OUR FAITH AT THE TABLE (AFRICAN AMERICAN CONGREGATION ADAPTION) (2005)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/4-we-are-what-you-eat-2002.pdf)

*“Now when it was evening, the disciples came to (Jesus) and said, ‘this is a desolate place, and the day is now over, send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.’ But Jesus said, ‘they need not go away; you give them something to eat.’ They said to him, ‘We have only five loaves here and two fish.’ And he said, ‘Bring them here to me.’ Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.”* Matthew 14: 15-21

“This version is revised to be culturally appropriate for African American churches… Dedicated to people the world over who hunger this day for food and for justice,… Just Eating? While this phrase could mean only eating, the word, just, also means ‘being honorable and fair in one’s dealings.’ This play on words captures a paradox that this curriculum addresses. Eating can be a mundane activity done with little thought or reflection; or it can be an opportunity to thoughtfully live out our faith and practice justice. What does it mean to practice our faith at the table? The just eating? Curriculum will help you better understand the relationship between our Christian heritage and our food. Drawing on Jesus’ story and the rituals of the Christian faith, this curriculum examines four aspects of our lives with food: the health of our bodies; the access others have to food; the health of the earth, which our food choices influence, and the ways we use food to extend hospitality and enrich relationships… Practicing Our Faith at the Table attempts to apply our Christian faith in wholistic and healthy ways. We all spend a lot of time eating or preparing to eat, and the habits we form reflect our values and shape our lives. May God bless you as you explore Just Eating?, and may your life be enriched.”

[**WE ARE WHAT WE EAT (2002)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/4-we-are-what-you-eat-2002.pdf)

*“And God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.’ And it was so.”* Genesis 1:29-30

***“9****When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest.****10****You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the Lord your God.”* Leviticus 19:9-10

“The study group recognized that the *world is not experiencing “a farm crisis,” but “an agricultural revolution*.” Monumental changes are occurring in agriculture and food production. They are revolutionary. In the United States, the smaller, independently operated family farms and ranches are being forced out of business by the increasing power of agricultural corporations. These changes have created an environment conducive to the manipulation of biotechnology, commodity production and processing, marketing, and retailing. They have resulted in economic trauma for family farmers/ranchers and for rural communities. Farming/ranching opportunities, in all probability, will never return to an earlier era. *Revolutionary changes are occurring and we can, as Christians, participate in this revolution*. Through baptism, we are called by God to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ and to work toward justice for all people. As people of God, we are required to be aware of issues affecting society and the need to be responsible stewards in our decision-making. *This study calls Presbyterians to participate in and influence the outcome of the agricultural revolution that is sweeping the planet and to be guided by the values rooted in the Gospel of sustainability, stewardship, compassion, and community.*”

[**GLOBALIZATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT – A STUDY PAPER (2003)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/3-globalization-environment-2003.pdf) **(REPEAT)**

*“And God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”* Genesis 1:28

“Economic globalization promises increasing material affluence to those who adopt its assumptions. Opponents discount the promises claiming that they are realized by only a few and includes environmental degradation. For those concerned for justice and environmental integrity there are very real abuses, and they stem from basic, taken for granted assumptions about nature. Both the structures of globalization and the basic assumptions that guide it are in need of change.”

[**REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON LIMITED WATER RESOURCES AND TAKINGS WITH STUDY GUIDE (2004)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/2-water-resources-2004.pdf)

*“Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marsh because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah. And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, ‘What shall we drink?’ And he cried to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a long, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.”* Exodus 15

“The problems associated with limited water resources and their equitable distribution are part of a larger whole. In the past two hundred years humans have developed powerful technologies to wrest resources from nature to improve the material conditions of human life. Improvements have been spectacular. *Now on the back of this good rides increased materialism, ecological degradation, and new forms of injustice.* The present task is to orient these technologies to sustainable and sufficient ends and to balance the power of those who own and manage these technologies. Issues of limited water resources, water rights, and takings are only one part of this larger task. In setting policy the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) should not lose sight of the larger task as it focuses on these issues.”

[**THE POWER TO CHANGE – U.S. ENERGY POLICY AND GLOBAL WARMING (2008)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/1-energyreport-2008.pdf)

*“When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, ‘It is better for me to die than to live.”* Jonah :8

*“The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) supports comprehensive, mandatory, and aggressive emission reductions that aim to limit the increase in Earth’s temperature to 2 degrees Celsius or less from pre-industrial levels.* Legislation should focus on the short-term goal of reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions 20 percent from 1990 levels by 2020, and 80 percent from 1990 levels by 2050.” As you read the background paper, you will understand that we are not simply throwing around numbers. Is report is very well-sourced and aware of the magnitude of conservation, innovation, and real sharing that will be needed if these goals are to be achieved. Other salient elements include *a set of ethical principles, directions for the church itself to take, and calls for taxation, cap-and-trade, and “polluter pays” approaches to shift subsidies and incentives toward renewable energy sources.* Carbon-intensive fossil fuels are to be minimized, public transport and de-centralized energy production to be encouraged, and the report anticipates the current economic crisis by calling for an end to unsustainable consumption practices in construction, urban sprawl and food production. Within this context, it urges Congress to: “place a moratorium on all new coal-fired and nuclear power plants until related environmental concerns (including waste storage) are addressed.” Us, even in providing a print version of this report, I am aware of the resources involved, even if they are recycled paper and non-toxic inks. But the bigger question is always the theological one. Can we hear the grave warnings in reports like this one from Christians who have carefully studied these matters? And then can we act as stewards of God’s earth, witnessing to Christ in the re-direction of our lives toward a more sustainable future? I pray that we can, and that our church’s good work can help in this great change.”

**GLOBALIZATION**

[**THE GLOBALIZATION OF ECONOMIC LIFE: CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH – A STUDY PAPER (2001)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/11-globalization-economic-life-2001.pdf)

*“Then she gave him 120 talents of gold, and a very great quantity of spices and precious stones. Never again came such an abundance of spices as these that the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon… And King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all that she desired, whatever she asked besides what was given her by the bounty of King Solomon.”* 1 Kings 10:10; 13

“*In its broadest sense, globalization refers to the rapid growth of linkages and interconnections between nations and social communities which make up the present world system. Thus, any meaningful discussion of globalization must begin with a recognition that it may mean different things to different people*: For some it refers primarily to the vast spread of global communication. Others think it best conveys the homogenization of consumer cultures. For still others, it is mostly a way of drawing attention to the emerging consciousness of our mutual dependence on the life support system of a small planet. Many others believe it is best reserved to describe economic globalization – the erasing of economic borders to allow the free flow of goods and money. And still others wonder if it might best be used to acknowledge the spread of global civil society – a force that questions other forms of globalization, especially economic globalization.”

[**HOPE FOR A GLOBAL FUTURE: TOWARD JUST AND SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (1996)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/12-hope-for-a-global-future-1996.pdf)

*“From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required, and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.”* Luke 12:48b

“Just and sustainable human development is the comprehensive enhancement of the quality of life for all, present and future; it necessarily involves the integration of economic, social, political, cultural, ecological, and spiritual dimensions of being. With this definition of "just and sustainable human development," this policy statement addresses international issues in the economic structure. *It is based on a biblical theology and Christian assumption of the mutual responsibility and equality of human beings in God's sight, stating that equitable distribution of goods and ecological constraints put moral limits on economic activity for the sake of human well-being, future generations, and nonhuman life*. It *calls for a renewed emphasis on the Reformed norm of frugality and lifts up the norm of sufficiency so that all may participate in the "good life," calling for abundant living in caring communities in a way that is less materialistic and more frugal.*”

* [The Employment Effects of Free Trade and Globalization – A Study Paper (2001)](http://store.pcusa.org/6860001003) - $3.00

[**GLOBALIZATION AND CULTURE – A STUDY PAPER (2003)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/9-globalization-culture-2003.pdf)

*“They served (Joseph) by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians. And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth. And the men looked at one another in amazement.”* Genesis 43 :32

“*Globalization and Culture* *addresses the cultural exchanges that accompany the globalization of markets with the expansion of financial systems, means of communication, movements of people and radical changes in global geo-politics*. Working assumptions about culture are teased out by introductory remarks on language, values and philosophy. Then, concepts emerging in the studies and debates over the impact of globalization on culture(s) are organized around the notion that the economic exchanges promoted by the globalization of the economy are accompanied by a cultural exchange in which the developed nations import greater cultural diversity from around the globe while exporting to the developing nations the cultural habits of production and consumption of the developed world. Some celebrate this exchange as progress; yet, others raise concern about certain values that are exported by the developed nations. One example is the globalization of time pressures that characterize the industrial and postindustrial organization of work and renders traditional practices like a common day of rest and worship unpractical for too many people.”

[**GLOBALIZATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT – A STUDY PAPER (2003)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/8-globalization-environment-2003.pdf)

*“And God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”* Genesis 1:28

“The focus of this paper is environmental degradation, in particular the attitudes toward nature that are still assumed in economic and political decisions and hence in the process of globalization. These assumed attitudes are now in conflict with newly emerging attitudes more conducive to environmental integrity. These old and new attitudes are also foundational to four major perspectives that are at the heart of the environmental debate over globalization. If economic globalization contributes to environmental degradation, it is certainly not the only contributor. Environmental degradation is a complex phenomenon with many causes. It is not a necessary consequence of globalization. *Matters could be otherwise; but until the world’s affluent learn to alter their desires to consume and to modify their attitudes toward nature, globalization will remain a cause of environmental degradation*.”

[**RESOLUTION ON JUST GLOBALIZATION, JUSTICE, OWNERSHIP, AND ACCOUNTABILITY (2006)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/6-resolution-on-just-globalization-2006.pdf)

*“So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth. And from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth.”* Genesis 11:8-9

Globalization and international trade are realities of today’s world. In this report, *globalization is defined as the process by which people, nations, and economies throughout the world become ever more connected and integrated*. Although often driven by economics, globalization includes *spiritual, cultural, political, and human welfare dimensions*. This report and the recommendations are to provide ethical insight for individual Christians and a set of responses for churches and the larger church through its agencies. As Christians, we understand that *what happens to people in the process of being “integrated” is a key criterion by which globalization must be measured*. We seek a kind of *globalization that reflects justice, community, and the sustainability of creation*. Thus we approve measures to (A) strengthen our own discipleship in an international context, and support measures by the community of nations and our own government that will (B) improve international governance, (C) manage technology for the common good, (D) support fair exchange in trade policy, (E) make development assistance more effective, (F) protect workers and vulnerable groups, and (G) encourage congregational, governing body, and missional responses.

[**JUST GLOBAL DISCIPLESHIP: A MISSION TRIP PREPARATION GUIDE FOR STUDENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS (2010)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/4-just_globalization_booklet-2010.pdf)

*“Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.”* 1 Timothy 4:11

“Whether it’s your first mission trip outside the United States, or your fifth, you have choices about how you witness, and how you understand the realities of what you encounter. *Witness with compassion and wisdom, and you will receive (spiritual) gifts from even the poorest people in the most destitute places. Witness with awareness of the “flip” side—the long-term goals and the short-term concerns of Just Globalization—and you will bring back a personal experience that may just change the world!* This is a very brief introduction to globalization—the economic, cultural and spiritual bonds and connections that bring new opportunities, but may mean bondage in many places of great inequality, like the places where your mission work will take you. It is written to encourage a Christian response to globalization, but that also requires seeing and naming things we do not believe in: oppression, grinding in- equality, the destruction of nature and human relationships, and more. You will find ideas on what to look for, what to ask about, and what to pray for, as you understand more about power and powerlessness. We sometimes see things more clearly when we step out of our own culture.

**ECONOMIC JUSTICE & COMPENSATION (IN CHURCH & SOCIETY)**

[**WORLD OF HURT, WORD OF LIFE: RENEWING GOD’S COMMUNION IN THE WORK OF ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION (2012)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/2-world-of-hurt-word-of-life-2012.pdf)

*“Then (Jesus) commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people.”* Mark 6:39-41a

“*The title, World of Hurt, Word of Life, points to the words of institution at communion, or the Lord’s Supper.* That sacrament of remembering the body of the church includes the most foundational words of life that give life to the church as a community. Using this Christian model is not intended to suggest that all U.S. citizens must become Christians, but that the equal, mutual concern of communion is our measure for economic values and practices. *We do not live “by bread alone,” or secular economics alone, of whatever school or ideology, but by the Word who is ultimately God with us, seeking incarnation in our personal and social life.* The foundational, theologically grounded values of concern to the church in our assessment of the economic crisis were listed in the 2010 assembly’s action: the values of human rights, covenant community, public responsibility, vocation affirming work, and sustainability. In applying these values, it should be clear that the Reformed approach always connects personal and social transformation, individual conscience, and the common good. In gospel language, we remember Jesus’ preaching of both the inner conversion from fear and greed to selfless faith, and the outer, institutional conversion of worldly rule into the reign of God. We remember our responsibility to the word in light of Jesus’ very example, which practiced the healing and feeding of multitudes from the ethos of the Beatitudes and his love for the least among us. In our recommendations for the church, we find the necessary grounding in the central liturgical place and meaning of Communion in the Reformed tradition and in the lives of all Presbyterian congregations. Across the entire spectrum of its impacts and causes, the economic crisis, we submit, is fed by a common condition of weakened or broken communion. *Our recommendations flow from this recognition and build on a core set of principles that define a life of communion with God and one another in contrast to the economic life that now prevails in the world and threatens our children’s future. In resetting the priorities of economic life around the practice and principles of communion, the church should not only provide for its own renewal, in relevant actions designed for congregations and other church bodies, but for a more robust Christian witness in the public square as well, including faith-based recommendations for significant changes in public policy*.

[**TAX JUSTICE: A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO A SECOND GILDED AGE (2014)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/1-acswp_tax_justice._42-2014.pdf)

*“The Pharisees... saying, ‘Tell us, then, what you think, is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?’… Then (Jesus) said to them, ‘Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s*.” Mark 22:21

“Having reviewed the nationwide debate over tax reform in recent years, the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy wishes it could share the conclusion that the nation is moving toward a more just and effective tax system. Unfortunately, however, there are many signs that the opposite is the case, and that we continue our long drift in the direction of a tax system that is less equitable and less adequate to meet this country’s social needs. The problems have been compounded by what is now a long-standing "race to the bottom" by both the federal and state governments. At the federal level, our laws have allowed a great deal of income from multinational companies to escape taxation, with the thought that loss of much of the country’s revenue base is justified by what is perceived as a need to create a low-tax environment for international business. At the state level, the race to the bottom has been fueled by a belief that tax rate reductions and/or the flattening of tax progressivity will attract more businesses to locate in particular states, creating more economic activity and jobs. The result has been fierce tax competition at both the international and U.S. state levels, with countries and states matching one another’s tax reductions, and a proliferation of tax avoidance and evasion. The ultimate result is that tax revenues are depressed around the world and around the United States, but no jurisdiction ends up with the competitive advantage it sought.”

[**SELECTED SOCIAL WITNESS POLICIES ON WORK AS VOCATION, UNIONS, AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING (1959-2008) FROM THE PRESBYTERIAN SOCIAL POLICY COMPILATION**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/5-collective_bargaining_policy-2008.pdf)

*”You shall not oppress a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your brothers or one of the sojourners who are in your land within your towns. You shall give him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets (for he is poor and counts on it), lest he cry against you to the Lord, and you be guilty of sin.”* Deuteronomy 24:14-15

“Employment, unemployment, labor relations, and the meaning of work are all subjects which have merited the attention of Presbyterian General Assemblies. At the close of World War II, the churches once again became involved with labor related issues, just as they had during the 1930's and earlier, going back to the 1908 Social Creed of the Churches. The 1932 Social Creed expansion was particularly strong. This selection ends with excerpts from the 2008 Social Creed. In **1952**, the PCUSA Assembly urged a "...greater emphasis upon *free collective bargaining in labor-management relations*," and that *Presbyterians "... participate more actively in management organizations and labor unions as an expression of Christian vocation*. . ." (PCUSA, 1952, p. 204). The first statement of the PCUS on work in the postwar period came in 1953 when its General Assembly directed that "... *churches undertake the responsibility of impressing men, women and young people of the value and significance of daily work as Christian vocation* . . ." (PCUS, 1953, p. 92). Meanwhile, the PCUSA Assembly urged that ". . .every church seek an effective ministry to bring together in Christian fellowship men and women from all occupations and walks of life, since we recognize that our churches all too often fail to minister across economic lines to all groups in their communities . . ." (PCUSA, 1953, p. 185). The **1960's** were a time during which the *Assemblies spoke of work as a vocation* (PCUS, 1962, p. 150), and in terms of society's ethical obligation to provide useful work for its members (UPCUSA, 1964, p. 303; UPCUSA, 1968, p. 387). The emphasis on the right to meaningful human labor led the 1971 UPCUSA Assembly to support minimum wage laws based on income adequacy and the 1972 and 1977 UPCUSA Assemblies to call on the government to act "as employer of last resort" (UPCUSA, 1971, p. 653; UPCUSA, 1972, p. 483; UPCUSA, 1977, p. 232). In 1976 the UPCUSA Assembly proposed very specific measures to promote full employment (UPCUSA, 1976, p. 503) and reaffirmed the right of all legal residents to employment (UPCUSA, 1976, p. 154). In **1980**, the Assemblies again examined work, as an issue. The 192nd General Assembly of the UPCUSA adopted the resolution on "Ministries of Restoration.” The resolution urged ". . . presbyteries to assist congregations . . . in facilitating the formation of projects to create work in their communities; and . . . further urges [them] to explore local tax laws, labor laws, zoning regulation . . . seeking changes to facilitate the ability to create new work to the maximum extent possible . . ." (UPCUSA, 1980, p. 218)

[**A REFORMED UNDERSTANDING OF USURY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY (2006)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/7-usury-2006.pdf)

*“When you make your neighbor a loan of any sort, you shall not go into his house to collect his pledge. You shall stand outside, and the man to whom you make the loan shall bring the pledge out to you. And if he is a poor man, you shall not sleep in his pledge. You shall restore to him the pledge as the sun sets, that he may sleep in his cloak and bless you. And it shall be righteousness for you before the Lord you God.”* Deuteronomy 24:10-13

*25 “If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him.”* Exodus 22:25

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, some of the core principles the church has tried to uphold in relation to money lending are the victims of a perverse reversal of moral logic. *In too many contemporary lending practices, not only are the poor charged interest (against the theological and ethical wisdom of the church), but they are also charged more interest than those who live in more favorable economic circumstances.* The Reformed tradition yields three primary questions that should be asked in evaluating the “usury quotient” of lending practices and legislation:

1. Does a practice or a law promote financial relationships that take advantage of the financial distress of those economically disadvantaged?
2. Is a practice or a law structured in a manner that balances the economic benefit for both the lender and the borrower?
3. Does a practice or a law lead to the conduct of financial transactions in a fair and just manner, e.g. characterized by truthfulness; nondiscrimination to the borrower; full (and understandable) disclosure; and the absence of coercion?

All three criteria are summed up in the rule of charity, the love of God and neighbor, which the reformers and the confessions judged should govern the question of usury.

[**LIVING THROUGH ECONOMIC CRISIS: THE CHURCH’S WITNESS IN TROUBLED TIMES (2010)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/3-economic-crisis-policy-2010.pdf)

*“Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he cold not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything,’ and out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.”* Mark 18:23-27

“In a time of continuing, deep economic recession, our faith gives us strength to face unemployment, poverty, and anxiety - not simply as individuals, but as a community with an ethical memory rooted in the Gospel. Understanding the economy as a servant of creation’s flourishing enables us to question the necessity of widening inequality and continued poverty, to look at the moral consequences of these trends on society and the church, and to propose greater democratic accountability for financial institutions that are called to serve the common good and depend ultimately on public funds and confidence. Informed by the historical balancing process between the public good and private enterprise, this resolution proposes measures to advance the values of cooperation, social protection, and equal opportunity while restraining those of greed, speculation, and inherited privilege. The bottom line is fairness. Without that, our economy is literally demoralized. After a brief review of our current crisis, this resolution summarizes the wealth of moral resources we have available to draw upon in confronting this economic crisis. It then *proposes basic ways we may support the re-balancing of the economy for fairness. This resolution lifts up five key values: human rights, a covenantal approach to mutual responsibility, engagement with the public order, work in service of vocation, and sustainability.* These then frame responses to the current predicament in light of our long-term vision of a stewardship society.” (p. 2)

[**GOD’S WORK IN OUR HANDS: EMPLOYMENT, COMMUNITY, AND CHRISTIAN VOCATION (1995)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/4-gods-work-in-our-hands-1995.pdf)

*“Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”* Jeremiah 1:4-5

The heart of the policy statement is ins ‘Principles of Vocation and Work,’ through which theology is brought to live in concrete ways. The principles, time-bound and contextual, are followed by a theological vision of the future, *the way in which God’s people are called to live together as the biblical understanding of God’s realm is realized*.” (p. iii)

[**GOD’S WORK IN WOMEN’S HANDS: PAY EQUITY AND JUST COMPENSATION (2008)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/3-acswppayequity-2008.pdf)

*“Soon afterward (Jesus) went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.”* Luke 8:1-3

“The goal of realizing equity in the church and the world for all of God’s children is sealed in Scripture, rooted in the Reformed tradition, and consistently mandated in Presbyterian policy statements. From its founding, God’s church has been called to provide a prophetic witness wherever and whenever equity remains unrealized. Whenever there are patterns of inequality that profoundly distort what is equitable - what people deserve and need to sustain themselves—not necessarily strict equality, then both the witness and the unity of the church are at stake. *In the church and in the world today there is a disturbing disparity in how people who work are compensated for their labor. Particularly distressing is the pay disparity that exists based on gender and race/ethnicity*. As people who believe and proclaim that *vocation is a gift from God, pay inequity stands as a sinful violation of God’s covenant with all of humanity*. (p. 7)

[**NEITHER POVERTY NOR RICHES: COMPASSION, EQUITY, AND THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH (2010)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/2-compensation-policy-2010.pdf)

*“Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. And he said, ‘Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”* Luke 21:1-5

“The study and recommendations present a theological analysis based in Scripture and our Reformed heritage, particularly that of John Calvin, of the secular market assumptions at work in the church, including those models of career and salary inequality that distort so many of our expectations. Reformation and change, though difficult, are vital to continued health and growth in the church, but must be based on a biblical and theological understanding of our mission. Hence, any plan for change, for re-focusing the church’s mission, incentives, and internal accountability, will arise from the context of our mutual vocation and mission. *We are called to resist the world’s trends, and not operate on the world’s terms. It means facing the disconnections within the church and among its agencies with honesty and humility, re-claiming as the Body of Christ the covenantal vision that is affirmed in the heart of the Gospel*.” (p. 4)

[**FAIRNESS IN MINISTERIAL COMPENSATION: SOLIDARITY AND INCENTIVES (2014)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/1-fairness_in_ministerial_compensation-2014.pdf)

*“And after this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, tow by two, into every place where he himself was about to go. And he said to t hem, ‘the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest… And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages.”* Luke 10:1-2; 7

“The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) is tasked to study matters of Christian conscience within and outside the church and to recommend measures that reflect the values and message of Jesus Christ. At core, the advisory committee believes that ministers share much the same motivation and should share much the same reward, as they serve the same church, a shared enterprise founded on God’s self-giving love in Jesus Christ. God’s solidarity with us in Christ in turn calls us to solidarity with the cause of Christ in the world, which is still to be turned upside down (Acts 17:6). *A key measure of that solidarity is greater equality in compensation.* Yet we all know that improving salaries in any part of our unequal society is hard. It will finally *depend on whether the church can combine faithfulness and effectiveness in responding to God’s call to share more equitably, while calling more people to Christ’s cause*.” (p. 1)

* [Toward a Just, Caring, and Dynamic Political Economy (1985, Study)](http://store.pcusa.org/33185111) – $2.00

**ECONOMIC & INVESTMENT WITNESS: BOYCOTTS & DIVESTMENT**

[**BOYCOTTS: POLICY ANALYSIS AND CRITERIA (1979)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/5-divestment_strategy-1984.pdf)

[**DIVESTMENT FROM MAJOR MILITARY, NUCLEAR WARHEAD, TOBACCO, AND OTHER FIRMS: (1982, SUBSEQUENT REVISIONS, CONSTITUTING A SOCIAL INVESTMENT SCREEN)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/4-boycotts_policy_analysis_criteria-1979.pdf)

*“But if someone says to you, This has been offered in sacrifice, then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience – I do not mean your conscience, but his.”*  1 Corinthians 10:28-29

 “The subject of boycotts is charged with strong emotions for many people. Therefore, the issues are difficult to define with absolute clarity. The following is presented in the hope that this paper will serve as a step toward defining the various dimensions of boycott as a method and provide criteria for evaluation of boycotts. It should be remembered that such deliverances, even when passed by the General Assembly, *are "ministerial and declarative"* (FG 3 1.07) in their guidance. Their purpose is to bring the force of God's love and justice to bear upon the consciences of the members of Christ's body.” (p. i)

[**THE DIVESTMENT STRATEGY: PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA (1984)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/3-2012_ga_action_on_boycott_of_settlement_products-final_text-2012.pdf)

*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* Matthew 6:19-21

**25.202:** “In this context, *divestment of holdings in a particular firm or class of firms is both part of the normal management of funds and potentially an occasion for Christian witness to God's call for justice and the renewal of society*. Considered below and in the study on which these principles and criteria are based, divestment refers specifically to divestment as a means for social witness and engagement. The imperatives of the gospel demand that we weigh the church's involvement in a particular investment with the church's engagement in the larger society. In some cases, trustee responsibility may make di-vestment difficult, if not impossible, within conventionally understood legal limits. Especially in light of our Reformed heritage of transforming involvement, however, the possibility of divestment will require careful deliberation.”

[**CALL TO BOYCOTT PRODUCTS FROM ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS (2012)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/2_ga_divestment_list-long_form-final-1982-2014.pdf)

*“There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you.”* Exodus 12:49

“Since the occupation of the Palestinian territories in 1967, *Israel has used its military rule to the advantage of Israeli corporations and economic interests, many times to the detriment of the Palestinian economy under its control*. All Palestinian imports and exports have been controlled, restricting the competition with Israeli producers, and making the Palestinian consumer market into a captive market for Israeli goods. Severe restrictions on movement of Palestinian labor and products inside the occupied territories and to neighboring areas have further increased the dependency of the Palestinian economy on Israeli companies as employers and retailers. The growing network of checkpoints and walls has all but destroyed Palestinian local production and the Palestinian labor bargaining power. Israeli companies have a relatively high concentration of capital, freedom of movement, and favorable legal conditions. When operating in the occupied territories they also enjoy special governmental support, access to cheap resources, tax incentives, and a very lax enforcement of labor laws and environmental protection laws. *These advantages often result in the exploitation of Palestinian labor, Palestinian natural resources, and the Palestinian consumer market* (<http://www.whoprofits.org/involvement/economic-exploitation>).” (p. 1)

[**DIVESTMENT FROM CORPORATIONS SUPPORTING THE OCCUPATION OF PALESTINE (JOINT COMMITTEE ON MISSION RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH INVESTMENT, MRTI)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/1-2014_mrti_report_on_i-p_corp_engage-_1-9_final-2014.pdf) **2014**

“***11****You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; and you shall not lie to one another.****12****And you shall not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God: I am the Lord.* ***13****You shall not defraud your neighbor; you shall not steal; and you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a laborer until morning.****14****You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.* ***15****You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor.****16****You shall not go around as a slandereramong your people, and you shall not profit by the bloodof your neighbor: I am the Lord.”* Leviticus 19:11-16

“Several General Assemblies since 2004 have given clear directives to the Committee on MRTI regarding corporations doing business in Israel and the Palestinian Territories (East Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank). *All corporations are urged to confine their business activities solely to peaceful pursuits*. This means no involvement in roadblocks to a just peace as identified by the General Assembly. Investments of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (PC(USA)) should be only in corporations involved solely in peaceful pursuits. The MRTI corporate engagement process is the proper vehicle for determining whether a corporation is involved solely in peaceful pursuits. Since 2004, MRTI developed a clear corporate engagement process consistent with General Assembly (GA) policy on divestment as an ethical investment strategy, and conducted research to identify corporations involved in the non-peaceful roadblocks to a just peace. Working with an interfaith coalition, MRTI engaged several corporations urging them to confine their business activity solely to peaceful pursuits; thus ending their complicity in and profiting from human rights violations. After several years of corporate engagement by MRTI and its interfaith partners, utilizing all the tools available to investors (correspondence, dialogues, proxy voting and filing shareholder resolutions), *three corporations, Caterpillar, Hewlett-Packard and Motorola Solutions,* remain entrenched in their involvement in non-peaceful pursuits, and regrettably show no inclination to change their behavior. In fact, if anything, these three corporations have deepened their non-peaceful involvement. As a result, MRTI regretfully informs the 221st General Assembly (2014) that *Caterpillar, Hewlett-Packard and Motorola Solutions are not in compliance with GA policy, and recommends that these three corporations be added to the GA’s proscription/divestment list until such time as their corporate activities are confined solely to peaceful pursuits*.” (p. 2)

**FAMILY, AGING, AND PASTORAL CARE**

[**RESOLUTION ON THE MINISTRY OF CAREGIVING IN RELATION TO OLDER ADULTS (2001)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/4-caregiving-older-adults-resolution-2001.pdf)

*“Likewise, you younger****men****, be subject to the****older men****. Yes, all of you clothe yourselves with humility and serve one another. God resists the proud, but gives loving kindness to the humble.”* I Peter 5:5

“*People of faith and the congregation in which they serve must assess the needs of the aging population in their community and seek ways to support and sustain family caregivers*. The church can play a vital role in developing models that provide caregiving to allow ho are in need.” (p. 2)

[**ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR OLDER ADULTS (2006)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/1-economic-security-older-adults-2006.pdf)

*“5 Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you 2 to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it - not for sordid gain but eagerly. 3 Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief shepherd appears, you will win the crown of glory that never fades away.”*

“Christians are called to focus first on the common good, not on what is good for only themselves. Both Old and New Testaments enjoin believers to care for their neighbors, especially the less fortunate, but increasingly today’s society finds it acceptable to base decisions on what’s in it for me. From a Christian perspective, this radical individualism is worrisome. *Emphasizing the common good has clear implications for improving the economic security of older Americans.* For example, Social Security is not a personal retirement plan but a social insurance program - a compact with other people, other generations, and the United States government. The essence of social insurance is community, that is, we are all in this together as God’s children. It also affirms the responsibility to make health insurance available to all Americans, not just to one’s own family.” (p. 1)

[**END OF LIFE DECISIONS ACSWP (2016)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/End-of-Life-Decisions-2016-ACSWP.pdf)

*26 Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”27 So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”* Genesis 1:26-27

*“****3****Then the Lord said, “My spirit shall not abidein mortals forever, for they are flesh; their days shall be one hundred twenty years.”* Genesis 6:6

“God’s good gift of life does not come without God’s guidance, guidance carried in the scriptures of Old and New Testaments and interpreted in our Confessions of Faith. As medical science has reduced pain and permitted longer life through the discovery of countless new therapies and treatments, the duration and enjoyment of human life have been extended for literally billions of people. *Our conviction of God’s abiding presence has accompanied this process, deepened by our Reformed Christian appreciation for the role of science in healing, and our pastoral sense that our wholeness in Christ co-exists within the— sometimes tragic-- range of human limitations. The sacredness of life reflects its cosmic Giver; as part of the web of creation, we accept the goodness of our inspirited bodies alongside their fragility, aging, and inevitable death*. We cherish the conviction of God’s embrace in life, through and beyond death - vividly expressed in St. Paul’s understanding of the resurrection in I Corinthians 15—but we also recognize that death is a mystery, and often still a time of pain and suffering.” (p. 1)

[**TRANSFORMING FAMILIES (2004)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/3-transformingfamilies-2004.pdf)

*“17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. 2 And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.” 3 Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, 4 “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. 6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. 7 I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. 8 And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God.”* Genesis 17:1-8

“As our Book of Order states concerning the church’s mission, “God’s redeeming and reconciling activity in the world continues through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, who confronts individuals and societies with Christ’s Lordship of life and calls them to repentance and to obedience to the will of God” (G- 3.0103). The sovereign love of God, the gracious lordship of Jesus Christ, and the empowering fellowship of the Holy Spirit ground our lives as Christians; yet we are also rooted in family structures that evidence the corrosive pressures around and within us, as well as the failed relationships among us, even as they remain sites of God’s gracious presence and activity. *Our family lives, like the other spheres of our existence, need transformation by the Holy Spirit; and our world needs the transformative agency of families that under- stand the breadth of their vocation as disciples of Jesus Christ*. (p. 1)

**ADDICTION & PASTORAL CARE: ~~SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE~~**

 *“These also reel with wine and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are swallowed by wine, they stagger with strong drink, they reel in vision, they stumble in giving judgment.”* [Isaiah 28:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+28%3A7&version=ESV)

*“It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.”* [Romans 14:21](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+14%3A21&version=ESV)

[**PORNOGRAPHY: FAR FROM THE SONG OF SONGS (1988)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/6-pornography-far-from-song-of-songs-1988.pdf)

*“I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys. 2 As a lily among brambles, so is my love among maidens. 3 As an apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among young men. With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. 4 He brought me to the banqueting house, and his intention toward me was love. 5 Sustain me with raisins, refresh me with apples; for I am faint with love. 6 O that his left hand was under my head, and that his right hand embraced me! 7 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the wild does: do not stir up or awaken love until it is ready!”* Song of Songs 2:1-7

“As a result of its research and study, the Task Force on Pornography is convinced that pornography is a powerful symptom of injustice and alienation in human society. *Through words and images, pornography debases God’s intended gifts of love and dignity in human sexuality*. Although humankind was created male and female, equally and fully in the image of God, the history of humanity reveals a fundamental pattern of dominance and subjugation. While this historic pattern of systematic oppression has been exposed more fully in our time than ever before, we live in an age also marked by the shattering of many norms of behavior and the subsequent loss of moral restraints. In such a time pornography has proliferated. The task force believes that the church is called to give serious attention to this issue, to reject all forms of dominance and subjugation, and to witness to loving respect and equality in human relationships. Reflected in the title of this report is the conviction that pornography represents human discord, far from the mutual sexual delight depicted biblically in the Song of Songs. *Pornography is a striking sign of human brokenness and alienation from God and from one another*. This particular form of brokenness and alienation discloses a distortion of male and female relationships rooted in a pattern of dominance and subjugation. The central issue of pornography is not so much the disturbance of traditional norms of sexual morality as it is the gross distortion of power revealed in its graphic sexual images.“ (p. 6)

[**TURN MOURNING INTO DANCING! A POLICY STATEMENT ON HEALING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND STUDY GUIDE (2001)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/5-dancing-2001.pdf)

*“In responding to domestic violence, the church ministers to both victims/survivors and abusers and engages in advocacy for peace and justice in society*. First of all, the church works for changes in society so that violence is not accepted or in any way legitimated by the social and cultural realities. This means working for systemic change to the end that, while immediate needed care is provided to victims and survivors and abusers are held to strict accountability, changes are made in society to prevent future victims of violence and abuse. In addition, the church is responsible to engage in ongoing reflection and repentance regarding its own complicity in violence and to model by its life and witness, a nonviolent and Christ-centered way of relating to one another and to the world. In dealing with these systemic issues, the whole church witnesses to Jesus Christ.” (p. 10)

[**RESOLUTION ON ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AGAINST EDUCATORS (2004)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/2-allegations-resolution-2004.pdf)

*“18 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” 2 He called a child, whom he put among them, 3 and said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. 6 “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.”* Matthew 18:1-6

“The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is already present in public education through students, educators, and staff. Historically, the church has been a pioneer in the development and support of public education. In recent decades the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has been especially concerned about child sexual abuse. “Turn Mourning into Dancing! A Policy Statement on Healing Domestic Violence,” approved by the 213th General Assembly (2001), defines child sexual abuse and determines that it “violates God’s commandments to love God and love our neighbor.” This policy calls for *ministering first to victims of abuse and then to the violators*. It directs “the Child Advocacy Office to work for the eradication of the sexual and immoral exploitation of children.” *The principles of “restorative justice” affirmed by the 214th General Assembly (2002) recognize that “safety is the first consideration of the community.* The first step toward restoration must be to protect those who have suffered and those who are at risk to suffer at the hands of others.” (p. 9)

[**GAMBLING - SUMMARY OF RESOURCES (1935—1996)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/social-issues/gambling/)

*6 Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; 7 for we brought nothing into the world, so that[*[*d*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=i+timothy+6&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-29779d)*] we can take nothing out of it; 8 but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. 9 But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.”* I Timothy 6:6-10

“*The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has a long history of opposition to all forms of gambling as an abdication of stewardship*. A **1950** statement described gambling as “an unchristian attempt to get something for nothing or at another’s expense.” Twenty-five years later, a Presbyterian General Assembly adopted a statement calling upon its members “to exert influence on local, state and national legislative bodies to oppose all forms of legalized gambling, e.g., lotteries, bingo, pari-mutuel betting, dog racing, horse racing, betting on sports games, casino games and numbers.” A **1992** statement petitioned civic and government leaders to resist state sanctioned gambling and the false promises for fiscal benefits from such and encouraged state councils of churches and related public policy advocacy groups to be active in resisting the spread of legalized gambling. The General Assembly reaffirmed its opposition to legalized gambling in **1994**, and it encouraged church leaders and members to become better educated and active about this issue. In **2000**, the General Assembly again reaffirmed its opposition to organized and institutional forms of gambling, and it called upon Presbyterians to refuse to participate in such gambling as a matter of faith and to join efforts to regulate, restrict, and eventually eliminate these forms.

[**DRUG REFORMS PROPOSED FOR THE PC(USA) 2018 GA**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/Drug-Reforms-proposed-for-PCUSA-2018-GA.pdf)

*“****5****They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes.* ***2****When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him.****3****This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain.****4****For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him.****5****Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.”* Luke 5:1-4

“Drug use and abuse are two different things and both affect the spiritual life our nation. In response to overtures from seven presbyteries, this report was requested by the 221st General Assembly (2014) to provide *advocacy “for effective drug policies grounded in science, compassion and human rights”* (Minutes, 2014, Part I, p. 630). The report analyzes the urgent and ongoing tragedies of mass incarceration and drug-related violence in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America. It presents a Christian framework for reform but is not primarily a study of addiction and recovery, though these necessarily receive attention. The core of the argument is in the title: *Healing Before Punishment*, which puts evidence-based treatment and racially unbiased regulation to the fore. This initial affirmation condenses the study’s findings and provides the logic for the recommendations.” (p. 2)

[**SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE U.S. MILITARY: A HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATE (2014)**](https://pc-biz.org/#/search/4789)

*“34 One day Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah, went to visit some of the Canaanite women. 2 When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, who was chief of that region, saw her, he took her and raped her.”*

“*The PC(USA) has approved several resolutions regarding sexual violence in a military context, where the chain of command creates particular vulnerability for those lower in rank.* In 1975, the General Assembly of the UPCUSA declared that “sexism and rigid sex-stereotyping [in the military] … should be vigorously eliminated.” In 1986, the 198th General Assembly of the unified PC(USA) denounced sex tourism and prostitution around military bases and installations. Most recently, the 210th General Assembly (1998) approved a “Resolution on the Military and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Women” denouncing rape used as a weapon of war as a human rights violation, a form of torture, and a war crime.” (p. 4)

[**HUMAN TRAFFICKING STATEMENT OF CONCERN ACSWP AND ACWC (2016)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/Human-Trafficking-Statement-of-Concern-2016-ACSWP-and-ACWC.pdf)

*“15 There he divided his men into groups, attacked the enemy by night, and defeated them. He chased them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus, 16 and got back all the loot that had been taken. He also brought back his nephew Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other prisoners.”* Genesis 14:15

“Following the church’s anti-trafficking experience, *this report challenges the predominant focus on the sex trafficking of women and children.* It broadens the understanding of trafficking and, in applying the human rights approach, shifts from the paradigm of criminalizing perpetrators and rescuing victims to addressing the economic inequalities and structural violence that make people vulnerable to forced labor. Human rights based policies then protect persons and empower them as workers, while also seeking to prevent their victimization.” (p. 1)

**HEALTHCARE, HOMELESSNESS, AND INCLUSION**

[Alcohol Use & Abuse – Social and Health Effects (1986)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/9-alcohol-1986.pdf)

[**LIFE ABUNDANT: VALUES, CHOICES, AND HEALTH CARE (1988)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/8-life-abundant-1988.pdf)

*“25 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? 28 And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ 32 For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well*.” Matthew 6:25-33

“*Health has many dimensions: anatomical, physical, spiritual, and mental*. An effective address to human health needs requires a comprehensive, whole-person approach to health and health services. Pneuma, psyche, and soma, spirit-mind-body, are interconnected in complex ways. To ignore the spiritual or mental dimensions of a person while addressing physical injury or illness is as scientifically irresponsible as it is religiously irresponsible to treat spiritual needs and ignore the physical and mental dimensions of the human body. The understanding and definition of health and healthcare should be largely derived from this holistic perspective rather than a purely medical one. Health, it can be argued, is the ability to respond effectively to a wide variety of challenges to live up to potential and promise. Illness can be understood as the inability to respond with adaptability to life's challenges or assaults on well-being and balance.” (p. 7)

[**RESOLUTION ON CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY AND A NATIONAL MEDICAL PLAN (1991)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/7-christian-responsibility-and-a-national-medical-plan-1991.pdf)

*“23 No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.”* I Timothy 5:23

“The record of health care in the waning years of the twentieth century is the story of entrapment and abandonment. Too many of us have no access to health care. Many more of us are facing reduced benefits and the threat of economic hardship and even bankruptcy. Our children and parents are at risk. The pattern is distinguished by diminished access and dwindling benefits. In such a grave situation, *Presbyterians at all levels are called upon to act in whatever way they are best suited to bring about a comprehensive National Medical Plan*.” (p. 3)

[**RESOLUTION ON ADVOCACY ON BEHALF OF THE UNINSURED (2002)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/6-advocacy-on-behalf-of-the-uninsured-2002.pdf)

*“33 But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.”* Luke 10:33-34

“The resolution that follows offers a biblical and theological rationale in light of the current situation for *church involvement advocating on behalf of uninsured persons.* It also provides the *framework for a congregational plan to advocate for health care access for all, as well as a copy of legislation currently before Congress and calling for basic access to health care for all*. Several trends affecting the uninsured are then explored followed by an examination of the challenges ahead as Presbyterians seek to be responsible in both their public and private lives in the quest of furthering God’s intention of health (shalom) for the earth and its people. The final section presents the recommendations approved by the 214th General Assembly as it met June 15-22, 2002, in Columbus, Ohio. In addition, Appendix I, “The Challenge to Presbyterians from the 214th General Assembly: Adequate Health Care for Everyone” offers concrete ways for individuals and their congregations to respond in advocacy for the uninsured. It provides the framework for a congregational plan to advocate for health care access for all. Appendix II, “Health Care Access Resolution” (House Concurrent Resolution 99), provides a copy of legislation currently before Congress and calling for basic access to health care for all.“ (p. 1)

[**LIVING INTO THE BODY OF CHRIST: TOWARDS FULL INCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (2006)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/5-living-into-the-body-of-christ-2006.pdf)

*“1 David asked, “Is anyone still left in Saul’s family? I want to show kindness to that person for Jonathan’s sake!” 2 Now there was a servant named Ziba from Saul’s family. So David’s servants called Ziba to him. King David said to him, “Are you Ziba?” He answered, “Yes, I am your servant.” 3 The king asked, “Is anyone left in Saul’s family? I want to show God’s kindness to that person.” Ziba answered the king, “Jonathan has a son still living who is crippled in both feet.” 4 The king asked Ziba, “Where is this son?” Ziba answered, “He is at the house of Makir son of Ammiel in Lo Debar.” 5 Then King David had servants bring Jonathan’s son from the house of Makir son of Ammiel in Lo Debar. 6 Mephibosheth, Jonathan’s son, came before David and bowed facedown on the floor. David said, “Mephibosheth!” Mephibosheth said, “I am your servant.” 7 David said to him, “Don’t be afraid. I will be kind to you for your father Jonathan’s sake. I will give you back all the land of your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table.”* 2 Samuel 9:1-7

“*The purpose of the recommendations above and the background to follow is to enable churches to welcome people with disabilities and to advocate with them for justice both within the church and in society*. Justice in the Reformed perspective is marked by the exhibition of social righteousness in conduct, covenant, and relationships. It takes form in social structures that permit the flourishing of all of God’s people. Therefore, full inclusion for people living with disabilities requires compassion and the establishment of a just social reality. The church exhibits its love for neighbor in the full participation of people living with disabilities, giving integrity to our advocacy for justice in the world. Seeking always the fullest life of the church, we further encourage our church to explore with other denominations new ways to embrace persons living with disabilities.” (p. 7)

[**COMFORT MY PEOPLE: A POLICY STATEMENT ON SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS (2008)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/3-serious-mental-illness-2008.pdf)

*“When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.* Psalm 34:17-20

“The biblical theme of “exile” guides this policy statement. After offering a working definition and an account of the historical context, the report focuses on two major themes. The first theme is “The Land of Exile,” which explores the difficulties and injustices endured by people with serious mental illness. The experience of mental illness disorders people’s lives in ways that exile them from themselves, their families, and their community. The second theme, “God’s Call to Comfort,” *focuses on appropriate ways congregations can minister with and to people with a serious mental illness*. Throughout this report, people are understood from a Christian incarnational perspective, called to be delivered from chaos and disorder into the wholeness and communion of salvation. At the same time, the report recognizes the validity of the “medical model,” with its gifts of biochemical medication and social-scientific analysis. The goal of restoration from exile includes the integration of both perspectives and the renewal of a healthier culture and society. Especially because this document will be read to give hope to those suffering from mental illness and their families, stories are included from various perspectives that illumine and give depth to this policy statement. e stories have been altered to conceal the identities of the people in them.” (p. 13)

[**BECOMING AN HIV AND AIDS COMPETENT CHURCH: PROPHETIC WITNESS AND COMPASSIONATE ACTION (2010)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/2-aids-policy-2010.pdf)

*“2 And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.” 3 And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, “I will; be clean.” And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”* Matthew 8:2-3

This report presents the PC(USA) with a concise but comprehensive look at HIV and AIDS thirty years after it made its first blip on our epidemiological radar screens. We begin with an overview of the development of the HIV and AIDS epidemic in the United States and globally and the church’s response. From this overview, we report on the present context of the global pandemic as it appears in the U.S. and other regions of the world. *We turn to Scripture for comfort, guidance, hope, and a prophetic vision of how to respond most faithfully. We then examine the marginalizing social forces that foster the spread of HIV: poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, stigma, and discrimination. We see how cultural and religious beliefs can contribute to the greater vulnerability of some groups, extending the power of this pandemic*. As we journey toward examining the dynamics of unequal social power, we lift up and highlight populations that have been historically underreported or miscategorized. This leads us to a social analysis and an assessment of our current situation where we address the implications of the dynamics of these powers and principalities for us as a church, nation, and world. Finally, we return to our theme and goal: *that the PC(USA) become an HIV and AIDS competent denomination defined by the merging of compassionate care, so well developed in current church policies and resources, and prophetic witness, now focused on the dynamics of unequal power nationally and globally, with the recognition that attention to both is necessary to stop the tragedy of this pandemic.*” (p. 4)

[**PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION ON REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH (2012)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/1-res_on_reproductive_health_care_access-2012.pdf)

*“15 The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, 16 “When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live.” 17 The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. 18 Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, “Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?” 19 The midwives answered Pharaoh, “Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive.” 20 So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. 21 And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.”* Genesis 1:15-21

*“Women’s access to health care, generally, and to reproductive health care in particular, is one of the bases of women’s equality, especially as women have entered the workforce.* Since the 1970s, equal and adequate access to reproductive health care has been repeatedly supported by Presbyterian General Assemblies as essential to the exercise of our God-given responsibilities for family life. The church has encouraged marriage and parenthood as part of God’s covenant of life and family planning as integral to family wellbeing. It has understood that couples are better prepared and more likely to choose parenthood when there are adequate medical and economic bases for family life. *The PC(USA) has consistently sought the reduction of unplanned pregnancies and unmarried and often underage pregnancies* because they too often result in abortion or child poverty, undermine women’s life opportunities and create additional family stress. The fact that the U.S. has the highest rates of abortion and child poverty of all modern nations is connected to the fact that almost half of the pregnancies in the U.S. are unintended and over 40 percent of them end in abortion. However, the challenge of unplanned pregnancies and the difficult circumstances that may lead to consideration of ending a pregnancy are not experienced in the same way by all women. The rate of unintended pregnancies has plummeted for higher income women who are college educated and married: from 34 per 1,000 women in 1994 to 24 per 1,000 women in 2006. However, the rate of unintended pregnancies has sky rocketed for poor and low-income women: from 88 per 1,000 women in 1994 to 132 per 1,000 women in 2006. Among the factors accounting for this tragic escalation is poor women’s unequal access to health care. (p. 2)

[**THE COVENANT OF LIFE AND THE CARING COMMUNITY & COVENANT AND CREATION: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON CONTRACEPTION AND ABORTION (1983; BIOMEDICAL ETHICS)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/8-covenant-of-life-and-covenant-and-creation-1993.pdf)

*“3 After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. 2 Job said: 3 “Let the day perish in which I was born, and the night that said, ‘A man-child is conceived.’ 4 Let that day be darkness! May God above not seek it, or light shine on it… 11 “Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire? 12 Why were there knees to receive me, or breasts for me to suck? 13 Now I would be lying down and quiet; I would be asleep; then I would be at rest 14 with kings and counselors of the earth who rebuild ruins for themselves, 15 or with princes who have gold, who fill their houses with silver. 16 Or why was I not buried like a stillborn child, like an infant that never sees the light?”* Job 3

“*As gift of God, life must be taken very seriously. It must be reverenced and valued. On the other hand, as God’s gift, it must not be taken too seriously, lest it become an object of idolatry, a substitute for the only God, the God who gives the gift of life.* Those who face reproductive problems tend to focus their lives almost totally on the desperate desire to bear children. Those who vehemently oppose abortion in the name of the fetus’s “right to life” elevate the significance of fetal life to the exclusion of any other factor or person in the particular situation of pregnancy. Physicians, confronted with a tiny premature newborn, may struggle more with competitiveness than compassion to salvage the fragile life, despite almost certain and catastrophic impairment should they “succeed.” Life is sacred, but its sanctity lies not in its biological basis but in its source: God.” (p. 18)

**RESOLUTIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

**2002-2003** [**HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATE**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/8-human_rights02-03-2003.pdf)

*“27  So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”* Genesis 1:27

“An overall look at the work of the churches in relation to their advocacy for human rights observance suggests that they will *undertake activities that promote respect for human rights based on both their faith as well as their commitment to the establishment and maintenance of a healthy and vibrant civil society*. The Middle East Council of Churches has been promoting this view for over a decade, and is now in the process of implementing a project on ‘the role of churches in human rights awareness and advocacy’. While this may not suit all contexts, it has generated positive reviews from local and regional human rights groups and civil society advocates. The program is keen on exploring the religious sources of human rights, both Christian and Muslim, and is working to engage religious institutions to promote human rights as an integral part of their pastoral and academic institutions. In a further step, human rights courses are being taught at local seminaries in Lebanon and Egypt, and the hope is that an aware cadre of ministers and priests will carry the message of tolerance, respect of human rights and human dignity to their pulpits.” (p. 34)

**2003-2004** [**HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATE**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/6-human-rights03-04-2004.pdf)

*“2 My brothers,* [*1*](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James2.1-4#footnote1)*show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. 2 For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, 3 and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” 4 have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?”* James 2:2-4

“This year’s report includes *five categories of concern* brought to the attention of the General Assembly Council (GAC), for the most part, by the partner churches around the world. They are *civil, political, economic, social and cultural, and religious*. The “Human Rights Update 2003−2004,” however, should not be construed by the members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as the definitive statement of all the human rights violations received by the GAC during the course of the year. The 216th General Assembly (2004) encourages the members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to continue to pray and work to end all forms of human rights violations worldwide. The “Human Rights Update 2003−2004” *includes an action study guide developed to assist the middle governing bodies, sessions, and individual members to engage and focus on human rights issues*. We hope adult study and advocacy groups, as well as session and presbytery committees, will use the “Human Rights Update 2003-2004” and will work for the guarantee and fulfillment of human rights for all God’s children, locally and globally.” (p. 1)

[**REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN COLOMBIA (2008)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/4-human-rights-colombia-2008.pdf)

*“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. They lived in a land of shadows, but now light is shining on them. 3 You have given them great joy, Lord; you have made them happy. They rejoice in what you have done, as people rejoice when they harvest grain or when they divide captured wealth. 4 For you have broken the yoke that burdened them and the rod that beat their shoulders. You have defeated the nation that oppressed and exploited your people, just as you defeated the army of Midian long ago. 5 The boots of the invading army and all their bloodstained clothing will be destroyed by fire.”* Isaiah 9:1-5

 *“18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20*

 “As Christians we are called to respond to injustices, wherever they may occur: healing the sick, feeding the poor, denouncing injustice, and ministering to those in need are values set before us in the teaching and actions of Jesus Christ (Refer to Mt. 25:31−40, NRSV and the Book of Order, G-3.0300c(3)). *Therefore, while it is fitting that we recommit to assist beleaguered Colombia, now more than ever it is important that we work with the religious, political, and social networks within our own country to contribute to a future that is just and fair for all of Colombia’s citizens.* The World Mission’s South America Office, the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, and the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship are three resources available to the members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who want to join with our sisters and brothers in Colombia as they work to end the patterns of internal violence that are tearing this country apart. Finally, as stated in the introduction of this report, the World Mission’s ministry areas and the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, in consultation with the Office of the General Assembly and other entities of the General Assembly Council, are available to help the members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in exploring ways to respond effectively to human violations around the world. Some of these concerns may be similar to the human rights violations occurring in Colombia - such as the paramilitary violations in the Philippines. Some may be as complex as the ongoing ethnic conflicts taking place in parts of the African continent. Others may be as enduring as the struggle to achieve lasting peace with justice in the Middle East. Regardless of the human rights issue, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is committed to “sharing with Christ in the establishing of his just, peaceable, and loving rule in the world” (Book of Order, G-3.0300c(3)(e)).” (p. 1184)

“For more than 152 years, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its predecessors have been engaged in ministry with our Christian sisters and brothers in Colombia. In 1856, the first Presbyterian Church was founded in Bogotá. The early Presbyterian missionaries established schools that have educated generations of respected citizens. Today, the educational advocacy efforts of this denomination in this region are moving forward through the dedicated service of this denomination’s World Mission’s area personnel and other agencies. (For more information on the ministry performed by the World Mission’s areas on behalf of the whole church, visit <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide>.) *The Presbyterian Church of Colombia gives strong and vital witness to the teachings and ministry of Jesus Christ and this church has called on us for support in its ministries with the displaced and most impoverished communities.* Its assembly has made declarations that warn of the damages from the Plan Colombia and the grave consequences that approval of a free trade agreement would have for broad sectors of Colombia’s population. Pastors and members of the church continue to put themselves at risk. Some have been martyred in order to witness faithfully to the demands of the gospel by serving those most in need and the victims of the violence.” (p. 1182)

**2010** [**HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATE**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/3-human_rights_update_2010.pdf)

*“20 And Joseph’s master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined; he remained there in prison. 21 But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love; he gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. 22 The chief jailer committed to Joseph’s care all the prisoners who were in the prison, and whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. 23 The chief jailer paid no heed to anything that was in Joseph’s care, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper.”* Genesis 39:20-23

*“The role of the church at every level is to be at least part of the conscience of society.* The basis for our daring to hold Amos’ plumb line of justice is our understanding that the prophetic role is willing to challenge those in power, kings of Israel then, governments today. The Human Rights Update has always recognized the global scope of God’s justice and honored all of the organizations and individuals who work to bring cruel practices to light and open prison doors. We see God’s spirit leading and calling in the countless acts of conscience to which brief reports can only point. With that awareness, we acknowledge one particular area of concern for renewed witness and ministry by our church and others: reform of the criminal justice system of the United States and the laws and lack of rehabilitation that currently put one in 133 of our citizens in prison, the highest proportion in the world today. Other international treaties could be mentioned, and *domestic* *initiatives with human trafficking and immigration reform* could be lifted up. But the great cost of the prison system in lives stunted and perhaps made more violent, the cycles of broken families and hurt children, the sick tolerance of sexual abuse in the prisons, the cost in tax moneys put to unproductive use, combined with the actual decline in crime in many areas even in a severe recession: all of these call for the church’s heart of conscience and ministry here at home.67 May God hold us accountable even as we seek to hold others accountable, and may Christ give us steadfastness and energy as we remember the cross and claim the power of redemption.” (p. 21)

**2012** [**HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATE**](https://pc-biz.org/#/search/3989)

*“15 When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. 16 Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, “Do not let me look on the death of the child.” And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept17 And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, “What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. 18 Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him.” 19 Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink.* Genesis 21:15-19

“The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) recommends that the 220th General Assembly (2012) *bring to the attention of the church significant trends and developments in human rights, particularly in the areas of women’s reproductive health care, workers’ rights and domestic civil liberties*…” (p. 1)

**IMMIGRATION**

[**TRANSFORMATION OF CHURCHES AND SOCIETY THROUGH ENCOUNTERS WITH NEW NEIGHBORS (1999)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/4-encounter-with-new-neighbors-1999.pdf)

*“15 Before he had finished speaking, there was Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham’s brother, coming out with her water jar on her shoulder. 16 The girl was very fair to look upon, a virgin, whom no man had known. She went down to the spring, filled her jar, and came up. 17 Then the servant ran to meet her and said, “Please let me sip a little water from your jar.” 18 “Drink, my lord,” she said, and quickly lowered her jar upon her hand and gave him a drink. 19 When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, “I will draw for your camels also, until they have finished drinking.” 20 So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough and ran again to the well to draw, and she drew for all his camels.”* Genesis 24:15-20

“*Let us challenge ourselves to trust in God’s power by entering into relationship with newcomers*. We need to face our fears and insecurities honestly as pastoral issues of central significance. We need to develop the resources that will enable us through mutual support to venture in faith to enter new friendships with the confidence that God will continue to open the way for future steps. Let us challenge ourselves to trust in the promises of God that God’s Kingdom will be on earth as it is in Heaven. The vision of God’s Kingdom calls us to participate in God’s work by breaking down barriers, healing divisions, guarding each person’s dignity, advocating for the voiceless, and extending the Gospel of reconciling love to all. It is a wonderful opportunity for many of our predominantly Anglo churches in the United States to change our face, indeed our whole body, into a multicolored face and body, in this way anticipating the future God has in store. Whereas fears may incline us to self-protectiveness, faith in the promise of God in Christ can launch our churches into adventurous encounters with new neighbors that will transform churches and energize us all for more expanded ministry.” (p. 2)

[**RESOLUTION CALLING FOR A COMPREHENSIVE LEGALIZATION PROGRAM FOR IMMIGRANTS LIVING AND WORKING IN THE UNITED STATES WITH STUDY GUIDE**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/1-immigration-resolution-2004.pdf)**:** [**SAME RESOLUTION AS ABOVE (IN SPANISH) (2004)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/2-inmigrantes-resolucion-2004.pdf)

*“48 If an alien who resides with you wants to celebrate the passover to the Lord, all his males shall be circumcised; then he may draw near to celebrate it; he shall be regarded as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it; 49 there shall be one law for the native and for the alien who resides among you.”* Exodus 12:48-49

*“22 You shall have one law for the alien and for the citizen: for I am the Lord your God.”* Leviticus 24:22

“As the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seeks to increase its diversity and expand its ministries to racial, ethnic, and cultural minorities, we find that increasing numbers of immigrant workers are present in our midst. *Our friendship with these neighbors can become a window to a deeper realization of the cruelties and vulnerabilities many immigrants experience in the U.S. The church is called to witness to the reconciliation that Christ brings to the world.* It is no cheap covering over of divisions and differences. Instead, reconciliation points to a dynamic unity of richly diverse humankind in which justice is established and each one is treasured as a gift of the Creator. General Assembly policies consistently emphasize that the “confession of Jesus Christ as Lord transforms ‘strangers’ into neighbors who are welcomed into our communities” (Minutes, 1999, Part I, p. 353, a.(3)). (p. 10)

**INTERNATIONAL ISSUES**

[**RESOLUTION ON AFRICA: A STUDY GUIDE AND REFLECTION (2005)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/8-africa-guide-2005.pdf)

*“6 The descendants of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. 7 The descendants of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The descendants of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan. 8 Cush became the father of Nimrod; he was the first on earth to become a mighty warrior. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said, “Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord.”*Genesis 10:6-9

“Nineteenth-century images of Africa continue to replay in our minds, even in this twenty- first century. We tend to be ignorant of the history of Africa and of its great diversity of life. We hold stereotypes of a backward continent. *The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has invited its members and friends to embark on a journey with Africans. If we no longer wish to look at Africa through a dim glass, but rather through high-intensity lenses, then we will have to be intentional in seeking new perspectives on a contemporary continent*. This guide for study and reflection is intended for adults of all ages. Older youth may find it informative also.” (p. 1)

[**WESTERN SAHARA: OCCUPIED, NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORY AND TEST CASE FOR INTERNATIONAL LAW (2014)**](https://pc-biz.org/#/search/4733)

*“10 So Samuel reported all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking him for a king. 11 He said, “These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots; 12 and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. 13 He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. 14 He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers. 15 He will take one-tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and his courtiers. 16 He will take your male and female slaves, and the best of your cattle and donkeys, and put them to his work. 17 He will take one-tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. 18 And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the Lord will not answer you in that day.”* I Samuel 8:10-18

*27 But on that day Joshua made them hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the Lord, to continue to this day, in the place that he should choose.* Joshua 9:27

“This response begins by describing the concern of the minister commissioner who initiated *this action on behalf of Western Sahara, a territory on the Northwestern coast of Africa, South of Morocco and North of Mauritania.* The response continues with a short review of the history of this disputed region, a review of its relevance to other matters of self-determination, particularly the occupation of Palestine, and concludes with recommendations for further study and action. The debate over Palestine has received far more attention from the 2012 and previous assemblies. As a supporter of nonviolent economic pressure on Israel to end that occupation, the commissioner maintained that the church should take a morally consistent position on an analogous situation: that of Western Sahara. The 220th General Assembly (2012) affirmed that the matter was worthy of further study and directed Presbyterian Mission Agency staff to prepare a report to guide action by the next General Assembly. Because the case raises important moral and legal questions, it requires careful exposition. Commissioners pressed for time may wish to read only the first and last two sections. (p. 2)

[**NEW HOPES AND REALITIES IN CUBAN AMERICAN RELATIONS: A ‘NEUVO MOMENTO (2016)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/New-Hopes-and-Realities-in-Cuban-American-Relations-2016-ACSWP.pdf)

*“9 I, John, your brother who share with you in Jesus the persecution and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.”* Revelation 1:9

“The United States and Cuba are poised to end one of the last chapters of the Cold War and to reestablish full official governmental and economic relations. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) affirms that direction and looks forward to a free and open relationship between our peoples and churches. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) rejoices at the prospect of deepening our communion with La Iglesia Presbiteriana-Reformada en Cuba (IPRC). We earnestly look to our sister church for guidance in how to proceed, not only for our mutual upbuilding in our shared faith in Jesus Christ, but for the blessing and wisdom of our peoples… At the same time, the church presents this report as a call for a better and fairer relationship than our nations have had both before and after Cuba’s 1959 revolution. *The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) continues to support the self-determination and initiative of the Cuban people, a cause for which they have struggled for more than two centuries.* Cuba has represented resistance to the hegemony of the United States in this hemisphere, and thus has played a symbolic role in regional movements for greater social and economic equality, as its social progress - though not its form of government—has been emulated. Cuba was also affected by its positioning within the bipolar competition of the Cold War. Now oligarchic rule in many Latin American nations has been transformed, and indigenous populations have begun to receive better treatment. In this “Momento Nuevo,” we hope that a transformed U.S.-Cuban relationship can help improve relations between peoples, governments, and cultures throughout Latin America. The General Assembly called for this report in June of 2014 in hopes of hastening the reconciliation of our peoples and churches, six months before the December 17, 2014, joint announcement of reopening diplomatic relations.” (p. 1)

[**BREAKING DOWN THE WALLS MIDDLE EAST REPORT & SUPPLEMENT (2010 & 2012)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/4-middle-east-study-2010-2012.pdf)

*“Jesus replied, ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead… But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion… Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? He said, ‘the one who showed him mercy.’”* Luke 10:30-37

“Increasingly, we find that we are living in a world with numerous walls and barriers. These are walls that force us to live in sometimes small and isolated compartments. These walls and the resulting compartments often prevent us from seeing and understanding the lives of others who live in different compartments or on the other side of the wall from us. These walls are leading many to live in fear, isolation, and poverty; therefore, preventing all parties from living in peace. This is no more obvious than with the conflict in Israel and Palestine. *Ideological, theological, political, economic, and even physical walls have been erected that are preventing the establishment of a just peace in the Middle East*. *Our Presbyterian confessions clearly affirm God’s reconciling work in Jesus Christ and the church’s mission of reconciliation as being the heart of the gospel*. Since Christ “... has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us,” we are entrusted as “ambassadors of Christ” with this “message of reconciliation.” We are called to be those who work to break down these walls that stand in the way of the realization of God’s peaceful and just kingdom.” (p. 1)

[**RESOLUTION ON THE MIDDLE EAST (1997)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/10-middleeast-resolution-1997.pdf)

*“2 In days to come the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. 3 Many peoples shall come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth instruction and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 4 He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”* Isaiah 2:2-4

“Painfully aware that the conflicts in the Middle East have exacted a terrible toll in human suffering and exacerbated international and interreligious tensions for more than half a century, and taking account of both the accomplishments so far and the challenges ahead, the 209th General Assembly (1997) believes that the peace process started in Madrid and cosponsored by the United States still holds the promise of achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace, and *that the United States needs to continue to play an active role of mediating peace and, in some instances, to take initiatives for reconciliation and restoration of relationships with countries with whom there continue to be barriers of hostility and alienation*.” (p. 7)

[**FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIC FREEDOM: MOVEMENTS FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE IN THE ARAB WORLD (2012)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/3-human_rts_civic_freedom...arab_world-2012.pdf)

*“13 Then they sent to him some Pharisees and some Herodians to trap him in what he said. 14 And they came and said to him, “Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? 15 Should we pay them, or should we not?” But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, “Why are you putting me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me see it.” 16 And they brought one. Then he said to them, “Whose head is this, and whose title?” They answered, “The emperor’s.” 17 Jesus said to them, “Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they were utterly amazed at him.”* Mark 12:13-17

“As a Christian community based in the United States, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) affirms our heritage of separating government from religious control and yet allowing faith communities to witness for fair and wise public policies. In the Arab world, and the larger Muslim world, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) supports practices of mutual respect, tolerance, and understanding based on principles of international law and diplomacy. *Aware of historic differences between Muslim and Christian understandings, the church sees these addressed best through dialogue, diplomacy, and respectful presence that recognize the importance of religion in societies.* This approach is to give religious leaders standing in public debate without making religion an instrument of the state, or vice versa.” (p. 1)

[**IRAQ: OUR RESPONSIBILITY AND THE FUTURE (2004)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/9-iraq-resolution-2004.pdf)

*He shall judge between many peoples, and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore;…”* Micah 4:3

“Opposition to the military action against Iraq based on just war principles and other principles of conscience, while not unanimous among Presbyterians, has been sufficiently widespread to indicate much concern. From the beginning, it has been the judgment of many church leaders, both in the United States and elsewhere, that *an invasion of Iraq has been unwise, immoral, and illegal. The 216th General Assembly (2004) concurs with this judgment*. That judgment has also been evident in widespread public feeling in numerous countries, including countries long friendly to the United States.” (p. 9)

[**TO REPENT, TO RESTORE, TO REBUILD, AND TO RECONCILE – A STUDY PAPER ON COSTLY LESSONS OF THE IRAQ WAR (2008)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/5-repent-restore-rebuild-reconcile-2008.pdf)

*“20 Then the Lord spoke to Joshua, saying, 2 “Say to the Israelites, ‘Appoint the cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses, 3 so that anyone who kills a person without intent or by mistake may flee there; they shall be for you a refuge from the avenger of blood. 4 The slayer shall flee to one of these cities and shall stand at the entrance of the gate of the city, and explain the case to the elders of that city; then the fugitive shall be taken into the city, and given a place, and shall remain with them. 5 And if the avenger of blood is in pursuit, they shall not give up the slayer, because the neighbor was killed by mistake, there having been no enmity between them before. 6 The slayer shall remain in that city until there is a trial before the congregation, until the death of the one who is high priest at the time: then the slayer may return home, to the town in which the deed was done.’”* Joshua 20:1-6

“The purpose of this study paper is to state more fully the Christian basis for the “costly lessons” affirmed in the resolution (now in Appendix A) and for the directions signaled in its title, “to repent, to restore, to rebuild and to reconcile.” In practical terms, repentance can simply mean changing the direction of our policy, but it means here changing assumptions about how international relations are done. Similarly, the bipartisan Iraq Study Group (Baker‐Hamilton Commission) speaks frequently of the *need for “national reconciliation” in Iraq, building on dialogue, equitable sharing of oil and other resources, and even‐controversial “amnesty” for those who participated in the horrific violence of the past five years*. Beyond this emphasis on retaining national coherence through hard compromise and international support - goals we support and see no need to duplicate in many cases - this paper sees the response to Iraq as a major test for how the international role of the U.S. may be revised. In this, it is influenced by the work of Donald W. Shriver Jr., on both forgiveness and repentance as faith‐inspired approaches to reconnect power and morality in international affairs. Its primary author is Edward L. Long Jr., a prolific scholar well‐ versed in Just War and Just Peace thinking, with significant insights from Gary Dorrien, a third well‐ known ethicist whose assessments of foreign policy appears regularly in the Christian Century and other periodicals.” (p. 1)

[**ON BUILDING PEACE IN IRAQ (2008) – RESOLUTION GOES WITH STUDY PAPER ABOVE**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/6-building-peace-in-iraq-2008.pdf)

*“34 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; 35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’” Matthew 25:34-36*

“The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), through the Office on the Middle East, the Iraq Partnership Network, and other programs, continues to lift up the plight of Iraqi refugees and displaced persons. Through the Peace Fund for Solidarity with the Churches of Iraq (Extra Commitment Opportunity account #E051722) and the Jinishian Memorial Program, the PC(USA) has also assisted the churches of the region, through the Middle East Council of Churches, as they address this crisis*. The GAC supports the call to the United States government to alleviate the suffering of Iraqi refugees. Part of that effort could involve working with other nations, particularly Iraq, and supporting the work of the Office of the UN high commissioner for refugees and other agencies.”* (p. 1159)

[**RESOLUTION ON EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL INHABITANTS OF ISRAEL AND PALESTINE, AND FOR CONVERSATIONS WITH PROPHETIC VOICES (2014)**](https://pc-biz.org/#/search/4793)

*“For God shows no partiality.”* Romans 2:11

“While peace talks are periodically undertaken to address the continuing problem of the occupation of Palestinian lands and the status of refugees from Israel going back to the 1947–49 period, Palestinians suffer continuous deprivation of human rights and reduction in the viability of any future state. *This resolution does not address the question of one or two states (an important but larger question), but focuses on the need for legal status and voting rights to protect human beings, primarily Muslim and Christian Arabs, whose capacity for redress of the violation of their rights is blocked by lack of citizenship, among other legal handicaps.* During each peace process these rights are further deferred, though they are the responsibility of the power with sovereignty to ensure.” (p. 3)

[**ISRAEL PALESTINE FOR HUMAN VALUES IN THE ABSENCE OF A JUST PEACE (2016)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/Israel-Palestine-for-Human-Values-in-the-Absence-of-a-Just-Peace.pdf)

*““8 Then Abram said to Lot, “Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herders and my herders; for we are kindred. 9 Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left.”*Genesis 18:8-9

“As disciples of Jesus Christ, the Prince of peace, of the people of Abraham and the lineage of David*, we stand with the people of Israel, affirming their right to exist as a sovereign nation, and we stand with the Palestinian people, affirming their rights to exist as a sovereign nation.* Therefore, the 222nd General Assembly (2016) affirms Footnote 8, which emphasizes a preference for a two-state solution. The assembly also affirms our desire to stay in conversation with our partners in Israel who work for peace. Finally, the assembly expresses its opposition to any efforts to deny or undermine the rights of the Palestinian people or the Jewish people to self-determination.” (p. 1)

**PEACE**

[**PEACEMAKING: THE BELIEVERS’ CALLING (1980)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/8-peacemaking-believers-calling-1980.pdf)

*“But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept… Jacob said, ‘No, please, if I have found favor in your sight, then accept my present from my hand. For I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of god, and you have accepted me. Please accept my blessing that is brought to you, because god has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough.”* Genesis 33:4: 10-11

“Twenty centuries ago, "in the fullness of time," God sent Jesus the Christ. Now there is a special time in history-a season (kairos)- summoning the faith and obedience of God's people. For Christ has gathered and deployed his people around the earth, across political and economic lines, in places of powerfully protected affluence, and among the poorest of the poor. The body of Christ responds to the world's pain with empathy and anguish, one part for another, in our time. But we believe that these times, so full of peril and tragedy for the human family, present a special call for obedience to our Lord, the Prince of Peace. *Tbe Spirit is calling us to life out of death. The church must discern the signs of the times in the light of what the Spirit is revealing. We see signs of resurrection as the Spirit moves the churches to call for peace. We are at a turning point. We are faced with the decision either to serve the Rule of God or to side with the powers of death through our complacency and silence*.” (p. 4)

[**CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE IN A NUCLEAR AGE (1988)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/7-nuclear_age-1988.pdf)

*“And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall select cities to be cities of refuge for you, that the manslayer who kills any person without intent may flee there. The cities shall be for you a refuge from the avenger, that the manslayer may not die until he stands before the congregation for judgment.”* Numbers 35:9-12

“*The General Assembly has been asked to give guidance to Presbyterians on a variety of issues related to living in the nuclear era.* There is no better way to summarize the positions taken in this paper than with words already in the Constitution of the church. What remains is to live out these words in both personal and corporate life. ‘No sphere of creation or culture is exempt from God’s dominion, and in them all God is to be glorified by the obedience of faith and of faithful service. Life in all its dimensions - personal and social, private and public, individual and corporate - is to be lived before God and unto God. It is understood as an expression of gratitude to God for the gospel of redeeming grace. As the covenant community gathers to worship God through the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments, so it disperses to serve God in the world. Family, culture, society and government, as well as the life of the individual are subject to the transforming power of God’s work in Jesus Christ. The justified seek justice, the forgiven show compassion, the reconciled pursue peace, and the redeemed advocate freedom. (S- 6.0500)’” (p. 19)

[**RESOLUTION ON JUST PEACEMAKING AND THE CALL FOR INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION FOR HUMANITARIAN RESCUE (1998)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/6_just_peacemaking-1998.pdf)

*“As you enter the house, greet it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.”* Matthew 10:13

*“This resolution seeks to address the growing assumption and acceptance of the idea that conflicts in the post-cold war era involving either a major violation of basic human rights or a massive degree of human suffering require the response of the international community.* Amplified by the immediate nature of television broadcasting, the intensity of such crises as Bosnia, Burma, Haiti, Rwanda, and Somalia call for a Christian response to help alleviate internal upheavals and to undertake humanitarian rescue to relieve suffering and rescue dying human beings. This resolution explores the challenges posed by such contemporary situations and brings to those challenges the rich resources of the biblical and theological heritage of the Reformed traditions for moral guidance. These resources include a long history of Presbyterian teaching about peace, war, and international responsibilities. And, it brings to bear a well-developed set of principles and policy positions that translate the mandate for peacemaking into specific policy guidelines. Throughout, the resolution reaffirms the theological convictions at the heart of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s peacemaking commitment, especially Peace-making: The Believers’ Calling convictions that rest upon trust in the sovereignty of God in world affairs. At its core, *Just Peacemaking* is about taking transforming initiatives; political, economic, and humanitarian initiatives designed to foster peace and justice. Indeed, the emphasis on initiatives is intended to preclude the circumstances which deteriorate into genocidal, civil, or international conflict. Efforts in this arena stand in relation to, not isolation from, the other facets of Just Peacemaking. *Just Peacemaking* recognizes, however, that there are human disasters that call for an emergency response. Sometimes these disasters are of such magnitude that the extraordinary use of military capability may be required for humanitarian purposes or for peacekeeping, peace building, and peace enforcing. This resolution seeks to develop criteria for evaluating military intervention for humanitarian reasons in the context of Just Peacemaking. It is understood that efforts to apply these criteria need to be in the context of ongoing diplomatic efforts with all parties involved in the resolution of the outstanding problems.” (p. 1)

[**RESOLUTION ON VIOLENCE, RELIGION, AND TERRORISM (2004)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/5-violence-religion-terrorism-2004.pdf)

*“On the third day, when they were sore, two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, took their swords and came against the city while it felt secure and killed all the males. They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the sword and took Dinah out of Shechem’s house and went away. “* Genesis 34:25-26

“The 214th General Assembly (2002) directed the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy “to authorize a task force to study and report on terrorism, the relationship of religion to violence, U.S. military response, and U.S. political and economic involvement that may contribute to global problems, and report to the 216th General Assembly (2004).” The assembly further described the work in this way: “A vital part of the work will be the defining of terrorism, war, and political violence and reviewing the applicability of the concepts of just peacemaking, just war, and nonviolent intervention in the context post September 11, 2001.” Therefore, this resolution is intended to provide a framework for Presbyterians to understand more fully and accurately the phenomenon of terrorism and its probable causes, as well as to make responsible judgments about the nature, size, and potential result of possible responses. *This report will focus on the role that religion plays in relationship to violence, most specifically the form of violence used to attack important centers and symbols of American power on September 11, 2001. It will also examine actions that have been, or can be, mounted to counter such violence and the role religion plays in supporting or challenging those counter terrorist actions…”* (p. 9)

[**ON STRENGTHENING THE PEACEMAKING PROGRAM (2010)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/4-on_strengthening_the_peacemaking_program-2010.pdf)

*“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his should, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”* Isaiah 9:6

“Thirty years ago, the 192nd General Assembly (1980) issued a call to the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America to give priority to peacemaking and to create a Peacemaking Program. The biblical and theological ethics of Peacemaking: The Believers’ Calling have served the church well. The Peacemaking Program has educated the church with excellent programs, educational materials, international visitors, study tours, and conferences. At this time, however, *the mission of this program deserves careful review, both in terms of current challenges to peace and commitment of the church’s resources for this witness*. Some funds designated for the program in the past have been spent down, and other related education and action programs (such as Church & Society magazine) have been ended. The United Nations’ Office has also seen its funding reduced, at a time when the needs and opportunities for theologically informed international witness substantially increased.” (p. 3)

[**PEACE DISCERNMENT INTERIM REPORT – ENCOUNTERING THE GOSPEL OF PEACE ANEW: AN INVITATION TO DISCERNMENT AND WITNESS (2012)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/3-peace-discernment-interim-report-2012.pdf)

*“Jesus said “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.* John 14:27

“This brief document invites members, congregations, and all councils and organizations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to prepare to participate in a process of discernment, to “encounter the Gospel of Peace anew.” This is the outline of the process requested by the last General Assembly. And while we are now preparing a guide and resource packet for discernment, our hope is not simply to help the church “count the costs” of grievous wars and violence in our culture, but to “meet the Prince of Peace again, as if for the first time.”  One of the overtures shaping the 219th General Assembly (2010)’s action clearly sought to *encourage our church to become a “peace church,*” not simply opposing particular wars but affirming nonviolence as a basic orientation toward conflict—abroad, at home, and in our everyday lives. The Assembly was not asked to take that position in 2010, but rather to put that basic question of war and violence before the whole church in relation to a wide range of Christian responses to our changing context in our nation and our world.”

[**RISKING PEACE IN A VIOLENT WORLD (2014)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/1-ga_221_item_11-11_risking_peacemaking_in_a_violent_world-2014.pdf)

*“Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God.”* Matthew 5:

“The commitment of the church to peace and reconciliation has a central role in Christian vocation. For Presbyterians, it is a matter of creedal standing, briefly yet powerfully set forth in the Brief Statement of Faith (1991) cited above, and outlined at greater length in The Confession of 1967. Wording from both confessions is echoed in the title of this report. We acknowledge not only a “fearful” but a violent world, even as we hear God’s call in our time to take new risks to challenge our country’s over-reliance on military might and under-investment in “the things that make for peace.” Thus the title invokes The Confession of 1967’s prophetic phrase: *“This search [for peace] requires that the nations pursue fresh and responsible relations across every line of conflict, even at the risk to national security, to reduce areas of strife and to broaden international understanding”* (Book of Confessions, 9.45).”

[**GUN VIOLENCE, GOSPEL VALUES: MOBILIZING IN RESPONSE TO GOD’S CALL (2010)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/1-gun-violence-policy-2010.pdf)

*“ 20 So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpets, they raised a great shout, and the wall fell down flat; so the people charged straight ahead into the city and captured it. 21 Then they devoted to destruction by the edge of the sword all in the city, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys.”* Joshua 6:20-21

*30 Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.”* Luke 10:20-21

Currently there are about 270 million privately owned firearms in the United States. If they were evenly distributed, almost every woman, man, and child in the entire population would possess a gun. We are, as a country, armed and dangerous - to ourselves. *The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has been concerned about this frightening phenomenon, and has consistently spoken out about it for three decades, as have our sisters and brothers in virtually every other faith tradition.* This report does not advocate more controls than the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has asked for in the past, yet it is clear that our voices have not been persuasive in themselves and our actions too limited to stem the tide of gun violence. *There are too many places in America where it is difficult to hear the gospel over the persistent retort of gunfire. We continue to be convinced that God calls us to protect the lives of all within the human community, as each is loved by our Creator. In order to be faithful to our vocation to seek God’s shalom, we need to seek new and active ways of effectively bringing life-saving change.* We can no longer tolerate such a preventable exile from God’s peaceable kingdom or reign. It is time to discuss these deadly social outcomes in our congregations. We believe there is much common ground within society for both responsible gun ownership and real reduction of gun violence. Yet we also know the way the dangers of accident, the prevalence of suicide by gun, and the high rates of homicide in the U.S., are in direct relationship to the accessibility to and possession of guns. We need to be willing to ask ourselves whether we should voluntarily limit our ownership of guns so that we may become more faithful stewards of the gospel. Presbyterians are called to be agents of change in the world, to be reconcilers because we ourselves have been reconciled. Therefore, we are calling upon the church, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to help build an effective spiritual and social awakening that says “No” to the prevalence of gun violence in this country.” (p. 4)

[**DRONES, WAR, AND SURVEILLANCE (2014)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/2-drones%2C_war_and_surveillance-2014.pdf)

*“And a certain woman threw an upper millstone on Abimelech’s head and crushed his skull.”* Judges 9:53

“Drones or unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) are remotely piloted aircraft used for surveillance and/or destruction of military targets. Drones are controversial because they have become a key element of contemporary warfare, allowing the killing of opponents without risk to the drone operator and generally without due process or public notice. Compared with the fifty targeted killings during the Administration of George W. Bush, by February 2013 the Obama Administration had used drones more than 350 times, killing an estimated 3,500 people, mainly in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia. *This brief study will examine the moral risks of using a method of warfare more similar to execution, the political risks of “blowback” from populations living under weaponized drones, and the dangers of a drone race among countries using new aerial platforms for boundary maintenance and the expansion of control.* Unless new rules can be developed and enforced internationally, drones will increasingly be the new face of military intervention and occupation as well as intelligence gathering.” (p. 4)

**POLITICS: RACE, CLASS, GENDER, AND RELIGION**

[**REFORMED FAITH AND POLITICS (1983)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/2-reformed_faith_and_politics-1983.pdf)

*“Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the Lord!”* Isaiah 31:1

“A central question of political ethics is: ‘Why ought one to obey the state?’ A Christian political ethic puts a different question: ‘How can we love God in serving our neighbors through politics?’ The purpose of humanity is to love God and to help our neighbor know the love of God. Therefore, *Christian political ethics cannot be autonomous; that I, Christians cannot think of the state as an order independent of God that they are free either to remold or to rebel against apart from God*. Christian political ethics are not heteronomous; that is, the laws of the state are not obligatory on Christians apart from God. Christian political ethics are theonomous; they are the ordering of government for the purposes of God. “(p. 11)

* Theology, Politics, Church/State and Religious Liberty, and Conscience

[**BUILDING COMMUNITY AMONG STRANGERS: A REPORT ON RACISM, SOCIAL CLASS DIVISIONS, SEX-BASED INJUSTICES, AND RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE AND CONFLICT (1999)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/4-building-community-among-strangers-1999.pdf)

*“And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants,
all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant - 7 these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. 8 Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered.”* Isaiah 58:6-8

“One of the greatest challenges created by the new reality of building community among strangers is the acknowledgment that we are all indeed strangers who have something to give to each other. We are challenged to affirm each other even when we do not understand each other. *There is no challenge facing our nation and, especially, our own church greater than the divisions based on racism… In the face of these challenges, we affirm that Jesus Christ has the power to overcome racism in our society and in our churches. We commit ourselves to wrestling with racism in the power of the Holy Spirit and in combating racism wherever we find it in our social, economic, and political environments in which we live*. Further, we commit ourselves to developing, supporting, and implementing strategies within the church at large and within our own congregations, that make our church more pro active in celebrating our rich cultural heritage as people of God.” (p. 10)

[**THE GOSPEL FROM DETROIT: RENEWING THE CHURCH’S URBAN VISION (2014)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/1-the_gospel_from_detroit-2014.pdf)

*“I have set watchmen all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the Lord in remembrance, take no rest, and hive him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth.”* Isaiah 62:6-7

*“The Gospel from Detroit” calls upon the church to embrace the prophetic mandate of Jer. 29:7 (NRSV) - “But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”* Jesus had the welfare of a city at heart when He gave instructions to His disciples -“And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high” (Lk. 24:49, NRSV). The church in Jerusalem, as found in Acts (Chapters 2–4), was a church that truly abounded in hope. Sadly, many churches in Detroit do not abound in hope. Instead of seeking the welfare of the city, many of these churches are forced to seek out their own welfare as they operate from a perspective of crisis, not power.” (p. 3)

[**FROM HOMELESSNESS TO HOPE: CONSTRUCTING JUST, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FOR ALL GOD’S PEOPLE (2008)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/4-homelessness_report-2008.pdf)

*“And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” Matthew 8:20*

“As Presbyterians, led from worship into the world, we are guided by Scripture and act out our calling as disciples of Jesus Christ. *In this time we are called to respond to the crisis of homelessness and affordable housing which, despite many programs and approaches aimed at ending homelessness, is still with us.* Nevertheless, it is at last becoming clear what is needed. Each person or family experiencing homelessness (1) must be treated with dignity and respect and offered hospitality and welcome to permanent housing, and (2) must have access to the necessary resources and services to enable them to meet their needs and be able to maintain housing. The path from homelessness to hope is challenging, but the church is called to respond to this crisis with all its resources - people, property, influence, advocacy, energy and nuances - as it works to construct just, sustainable communities for all God’s people.” (p. 25)

[**CITY CHURCHES: CONVICTION, CONVERSATION, AND CALL TO ACTION (2016)**](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/City-Churches-Conviction-Conversation-Call-to-Action.pdf)

*“And to the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘… I know you works, your toll and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary.”* Revelation 2:1a; 2-3

“*The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), as represented by the General Assembly, opposes the economics and practices of exclusion that restrict people from zones of privileged access, whether by law or custom.* How long will patterns of separation and segregation be allowed to replicate fear and prejudice? Recalling the Confession of 1967 as we come to Portland, Oregon, in 2016, forty years after that Confession was sent to the presbyteries, we lift up the phrase, “with an urgency born of this hope.” May we share an urgency born of the hope that our cities may be places of healing more than violence, of love more than fear, of creativity more than desolation, and of community more than exploitation.” (p. 1)